



## Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

### Sunday 22nd March 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 understanding. *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.



#### A little pointer before you begin –

This is a Lent of Long Gospels – When taking a gospel story for prayer, it is often helpful to break the story up into its individual sections. Each section represents a movement, an interaction between the characters. This is particularly true of a long story such as the one we have today. There are six different scenes in this story. Any one of them could be the focal point for your prayer. Try to identify the movement in the section you take for prayer. The objective is to discover the Good News in the story. The Good News is that the story of grace is deeper than the story of sin, both in the gospels and in our lives. One should also note the different characters in the story, for each of them could be a character with whom you can identify. In this story we have Jesus, the blind beggar, the disciples, the neighbours, the blind man's parents and the Pharisees.

### THIS SUNDAY'S GOSPEL – John 9:1-42

#### ‘The Man Born Blind’

As He went along, He saw a man who had been blind from birth. His disciples asked Him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should have been born blind?' 'Neither he nor his parents sinned,' Jesus answered, 'he was born blind so that the works of God might be revealed in him. 'As long as day lasts, we must carry out the work of the one who sent me; the night will soon be here when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.'

Having said this, he spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man, and said to him, 'Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam' (*the name means 'one who has been sent'*). So he went off and washed and came back able to see.

His neighbours and the people who used to see him before (for he was a beggar) said, 'Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?' Some said, 'Yes, it is the same one.' Others said, 'No, but he looks just like him.' The man himself said, 'Yes, I am the one.' So they said to him, 'Then how is it that your eyes were opened?' He answered, 'The man called Jesus made a paste, daubed my eyes with it and said to me, "Go off and wash at Siloam"; so I went, and when I washed I gained my sight.' They asked, 'Where is he?' He answered, 'I don't know.' They brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees.

It had been a Sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had gained his sight, he said, 'He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see.' Then some of the Pharisees said, 'That man cannot be from God: he does not keep the Sabbath.' Others said, 'How can a sinner produce signs like this?' And there was division among them. So they spoke to the blind man again, 'What have you to say about Him yourself, now that He has opened your eyes?' The man answered, 'He is a prophet.'

However, the Jews would not believe that the man had been blind without first sending for the parents of the man who had gained his sight and asking them, 'Is this man really the son of yours who you say was born blind? If so, how is it that he is now able to see?' His parents answered, 'We know he is our son and we know he was born blind, but how he can see, we don't know, nor who opened his eyes. Ask him. He is old enough: let him speak for himself.' His parents spoke like this out of fear of the Jews, who had already agreed to ban from the synagogue anyone who should acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. This was why his parents said, 'He is old enough; ask him.'

So the Jews sent for the man again and said to him, 'Give glory to God! We are satisfied that this man is a sinner.' The man answered, 'Whether he is a sinner I don't know; all I know is that I was blind and now I can see.' They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' He replied, 'I have told you once and you wouldn't listen.'

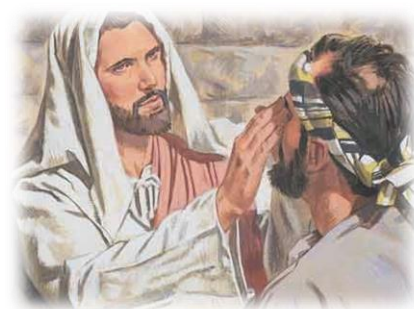
Why do you want to hear it all again? Do you want to become His disciples yourselves?' At this they hurled abuse at him, 'It is you who are His disciple, we are disciples of Moses: we know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this man, we don't know where He comes from.' The man replied, 'That is just what is so amazing! You don't know where He comes from and He has opened my eyes! We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but God does listen to people who are devout and do his will. Ever since the world began it is unheard of for anyone to open the eyes of someone born blind; if this man were not from God, He wouldn't have been able to do anything.' They retorted, 'Are you trying to teach us, and you a sinner through and through ever since you were born!' And they ejected him.

Jesus heard they had ejected him, and when He found him He said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of man?' 36 'Sir,' the man replied, 'tell me who he is so that I may believe in Him.' Jesus said, 'You have seen Him; He is speaking to you.' The man said, 'Lord, I believe,' and worshipped Him.

Jesus said, 'It is for judgement that I have come into this world, so that those without sight may see and those with sight may become blind.' 40 Hearing this, some Pharisees who were present said to Him, 'So we are blind, are we?' Jesus replied, 'If you were blind, you would not be guilty, but since you say, "We can see," your guilt remains.'

## A Short Thought

How we respond to pressure can vary very much from person to person. In John's Gospel, there are two related stories of people being healed, one in chapter 5 and the other in chapter 9, today's reading. The man at the pool eventually betrays Jesus. The man born blind resists pressure and even grows on the strength of it. Part of his energy comes from his experience - no matter what others may say about Jesus, he himself once was blind and now he sees! His courageous attachment to what he knows from his personal encounter with Jesus leads eventually to a full act of faith. The story is rich in symbolism: Light and darkness, sight and blindness, enlightenment, Baptism. Each healing story that we hear in the Gospels is an answer to the questions: "How do you meet Jesus? How do you respond to him?" Benedict XVI wrote: "Being a Christian is the encounter with an event, a person, who gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction." What encounters have you had today?



## SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

- What part of this text touched, disturbed me or inspired me the most? Why?
- The Gospel begins with Jesus seeing the man born blind. To be seen is more than to be acknowledged - it is to be known, to be loved. Do I really believe Jesus sees me? Can I see Jesus in others?
- The man born blind washed the mud from his eyes in the pool called Siloam, which means "the one who is sent." How is Jesus a pool to wash the mud from my eyes so that I might see?
- As soon as the man could see, his life became very difficult. People wondered whether he was the same man. Have you had moments that have so changed you that others are surprised or have not accepted the transformation? Can you accept others when they change?
- Under pressure, the blind man and the community he stands for are obliged to reflect again and again on what they really believe. What has happened to my faith in times of pressure? How does what I believe influence my actions?

## Prayer

God our Creator and protector, may we see your miraculous works in the midst of your people. May we be a light for those in a time of darkness and may our community of faith be a beacon of hope and compassion in times of hardship and uncertainty. I ask this through Christ and Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, holy and mighty God for ever and ever. Amen

### Prayer in these uncertain times

*We pray for all those in our country and throughout the world suffering from the Corona Virus. May its victims and their families be strengthened by the support of our community of faith and restored soon to full health. We also pray for our leaders and medical personnel who deal with the virus. May we keep calm and may we join together in solidarity with care and compassion to tackle this emergency. This we ask in confidence through Christ Our Lord. Amen*