



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

### Sunday 30th August 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.



### THIS SUNDAY'S GOSPEL – Matthew 16:21-27

#### Take up your cross and follow me...

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done."

### The High Cost of Discipleship

Matthew 16:21-27



### A Short Thought

God's ways are not our ways. God's thoughts are not our thoughts. God's mind is not our mind. God's will is not our will. But all of human life, if it is lived in authenticity and faith, is spent in attending to the ways and thoughts and mind and will of God so as to accept these as our own and live accordingly. The gospel today highlights the struggle of knowing and living in concert with God's will even when and especially if such knowledge and the lifestyle which issues from it entails suffering. In today's gospel, Peter's difficulty in accepting the ways and will of God is evidenced in his reaction to Jesus. Surely, Peter thought, suffering and death were not to be predicated with the Messiah! Jesus' rebuke of Peter challenged him and all would-be-disciples to accept in faith, even that which they had not expected and for which they had no desire. Jesus issued a further challenge that those who wished to follow him, would be asked to bear a similar burden on their way to glory.

Jesus had the gift of saying things directly and plainly, with a power to penetrate all our defences and lead us to a new awareness. Today's message puts before us the paradox of the Gospel: we gain life by letting go of it. If I put my happiness, my being loved, at the centre of my life, then I will surely fail, even though to be loved and to be happy are really important. If on the other hand I put the happiness of others first and love them unconditionally, then I too will know unselfish love and deep happiness. This is the very insight and wisdom that Jesus puts before us as the key not just to love but to life and within that, the key to authentic discipleship precisely as a way of life.

### SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Short-term loss is sometimes necessary for long-term gain as a student studying or an athlete training can testify. When have you found that denying yourself proved to be worthwhile because of what you gained afterwards?

2. "Jesus was teaching his followers that the path of discipleship would involve pain and suffering. Peter would have none of it. When have you found that taking up your cross brought you life, even though at the time it may have been difficult?
3. Jesus was so single-minded, he knew very well what putting love as the greatest commandment and being close to the poor would mean. He knew that because his good news message was not acceptable to the authorities he would suffer and die, but God would see that evil would not have the last say. Have you seen a good news message survive even though opponents tried to stifle it?
4. Jesus pulls no punches, he challenges us to be ready to lose our lives to be able to save them. What does this mean in my life, here and now. What might I feel called to let go of to be able to live more fully?
5. Jesus promised that those who suffer for the kingdom would be rewarded. Perhaps, even in this earthly life, you have experienced reward.

## Prayer -

O God, whose word burns like a fire within us, grant us a bold and faithful spirit, that in your strength we may be unafraid to speak your word and follow where you lead. We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, 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*

