



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 6th Sept 2020

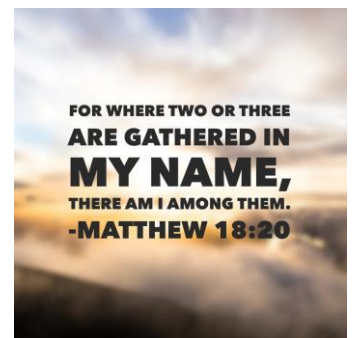
1. Start with stillness and quietening down; then gently read the passage, noticing any feelings and connections to your own experience.
2. Read the passage again and spend understand. *The notes in your Bible may be of help at this point.*
3. Read the passage a third time - wondering how you yourself 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 – Matthew 18:15-20

'...where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them'

'If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you: whatever the misdemeanour, the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain the charge. But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community; and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a gentile or a tax collector. 'In truth I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 'In truth I tell you once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I am there among them.' (New Jerusalem Bible)



A Short Thought

Our Gospel reading today has some harsh dimensions and most likely it reflects not the teaching of Jesus directly but the practices in the church for which Matthew was writing. People who refuse to acknowledge their failures are to be treated as pagans and tax collectors! But just how are pagans and tax collectors treated by Jesus and in the Gospel of Matthew? They are welcomed and forgiven! Any permanent exclusion is to be resisted on the example and teaching of Jesus himself.

So Jesus challenges his disciples: "If your brother or sister sins against you, you should go and talk with them about the situation." Now ask yourself: What is your typical reaction when someone 'sins against you'? Do you ignore them? Do you take some time to decide how you want to respond? Or do you nurse your anger or hurt or hold a grudge? Do you retaliate in like manner?

Most of us developed and honed our personal response to being wronged at a very young age. Most times we didn't even know we were developing a personal response. We may have modelled our response on how our parents responded in these types of situations. We may have learned how to manipulate others. Or we simply may have decided to keep our distance from the individuals who we have judged to have wronged us (if that was an option). Or perhaps you were taught to talk with the person and work it out? Today how do I respond when another person sins against me? Is my response different from when I was a child? Or is my reaction basically the same as when I was an 8-year old or a 14-year old? The reality is that our instinctive (*and automatic*) responses are developed at a very young age, perhaps even beginning while we are still in the womb. These responses become so automatic in our childhood that we may not consciously be aware of them.

Today may be a good day to ask ourselves: how do I respond when I hurt or wronged by another?

Forgiveness is meant to be at the core of who we are, and to be honest with you, if we can't do it between ourselves in the church, how can we ever be agents of reconciliation in the world?

