



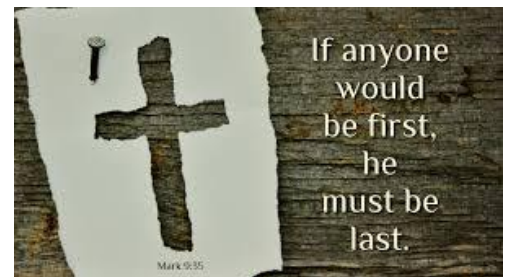
## Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2021

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 – Mark 9:30-37** *Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all*

*They went on from there and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him. Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."*



### **A Short Thought**

In our own time, no one wants to look uninformed, confused, or clueless. We withhold our toughest questions, often within our own churches and within our community. We pretend we don't have hard questions and don't have spaces for these to be risen. Yet the deepest mysteries of life do indeed elude us. We turn a blind eye to things around us that raise these for us. The experience of these last two years raised these 'big', 'real' questions for most. Why do good people suffer? Why is this happening? Why are humans so brutal to one another? Why does evil seem to succeed? If God's own Son is betrayed and killed, then no one is safe. Why did God set up a world like this? As a Church we all too often do a great dis-service to this questioning by coming with readymade answers and solutions to questions that are not even asked!! Have we safe and secure places to raise, ask and talk about these questions? Are our churches and parishes safe places of no judgement allowing or facilitating those of faith and little or no faith to ask these hard questions – or do we just avoid it, afraid of what it may ask us to change? Or, like the disciples, are we afraid and embarrassed to address them without readymade answers?

Verse 34 reveals what happens to the disciples when they sidestep the real questions they are afraid to ask – they turn to arguing with each other, squabbling among themselves over petty issues of rank and status. There is a direct line drawn from verse 32 to verse 34. When the disciples avoid asking hard questions, they focus on posturing about who is right. We know this too well in the church. How would this story be different if the disciples had asked Jesus their questions? What kind of conversation might have ensued between Jesus and the disciples? What kind of relationship would it have engendered with each other? How would our stories be different if we ask Jesus our questions? What kind of conversations might we pursue with Jesus? How would our life as disciples together be different as a result?

The good news is that Jesus welcomes us even when we do not understand or do not know. This Gospel closes with Jesus embracing a child, the ultimate symbol of not knowing, not understanding, immature and undeveloped. We need not fear our questions, our misunderstandings, our confusion or our curiosity in the presence of One whose "perfect love casts out all fear" (1 John 4:18). Keep asking the questions, difficult as they may be, because the right question is more important at times than the best answer. Have a great week,

## SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Jesus uses the time they are travelling along the road to teach his disciples what it means to be one of his followers. Think of the wisdom you have acquired about life, about faith, about what it means to be a Christian. Who have been your teachers? Remember them and give thanks for them.
2. Jesus comes among us to show us how to love. He showed that love even to the end. Recall your experiences of loving in your own life and a time when your loving made demands on you. What kinds of feelings does this memory evoke for you? Talk to Jesus about those feelings.
3. What are the big, real questions that you have? Can you sit with them no matter how uncomfortable they make you feel? Bring them to Jesus.
4. In welcoming a little child, Jesus reminds us that greatness is to be found in loving service of the weaker members of the community. Do I ambition to be important, wealthy, a celebrity?
5. One of the lessons Jesus gives them is that there is a dying to be endured as we move to a fuller life. That was the road he would travel. It is also our journey, not only at the end of this earthly life, but also in small ways through life. When have you found that by dying in some way you came to a fuller life?

## Prayer -

O God, protector of the poor and defender of the just, in your kingdom the last become first, the gentle are strong, and the lowly exalted. Help us to live with the questions that life throws at us may they not lead us to apathy. Give us the wisdom from above, that we may find in your servant Jesus the pattern of true discipleship and the grace to persevere in following him, 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*

