



Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

Sunday 3rd Oct 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 10:2-16

Therefore what God joined together, let no one separate

Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?'

They said, 'Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.' But Jesus said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation,

"God made them male and female." "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'

Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.



A Short Thought

The followers of Christ can be caught between valuing the commitment of life's promises in marriage, and compassion for people whose marriages maybe should never have taken place, or have broken up. Jesus values the commitment too; adultery is condemned as a sin against justice – of tampering in some way with the commitment made of one person to another.

Why is this followed by a comment about children, that they should come to him? Obviously from love for children, and also for love of the child inside each of us, the child of God that we all are. So for the child of God who is suffering through the breakdown of commitment, Jesus is saying to come to him, be welcomed into his arms and be blessed.

While trying to value commitment in marriage and also in religious life, he is also reaching out to people who are in difficult, personal situations. We follow him in this, letting go of judgements about people and about their relationships. We never know people unless we have walked in their shoes and at their pace.

The church has tried in many ways to reach out to people who need care, protection and healing; this is the hope of the Synodal approach being adopted around the church, and is very much part of the approach of Pope Francis.

In any situation where there are big differences in people's attitudes, especially in the family, the encouragement is to keep doors of communication open. In the long term this is the way towards greater love and healing, and allowing Jesus be part of every aspect of life. Many parents have been happy in later years that they kept lines of communication open with children whose lifestyles may have been different from theirs. *Donal Neary SJ.*

SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

- Jesus' teaching on marriage, and the inadmissibility of divorce may be a joyful message to those who receive from God the wonderful gift of marital union but a source of anguish for those whose attempt at marriage has failed. In 'Amoris Laetitia', Pope Francis invites Christian families "to be a sign of mercy and closeness wherever family life remains imperfect or lacks peace and joy". He offers "an invitation to mercy and the pastoral discernment of those situations that fall short of what the Lord demands of us" (#5-6). Mercy is the love which all of us need to experience, regardless of our life-history or track record. Where have you experienced real mercy?
- Marriages, relationships do break down, but in this story Jesus appears as the wise person urging people to seek first the original harmony where possible, rather than seek escape routes when difficulties arise. When have you found that, in marriage or in other relationships, the bonds have been strengthened when you have been prepared to work through difficulties?
- There are other things that we needlessly and wrongly put in opposition: young and old, male and female, people from different cultures, body and soul. Perhaps at times you have discovered the advantages of exploring the richness in combining such apparently exclusive opposites.
- The 'little children' represent those who are among the most weak and vulnerable in society, without power or status. They act spontaneously by 'receiving'. Am I receptive to the kingdom, since it comes to me as free gift from God's bountiful hands?
- Two 'cares' in the gospel today - care for marriage and care for children. Maybe in prayer this week we can bring to mind people who are close to and who have marriage or family cares, and pray for them. Help us, Lord, to truly care for the earth, for marriage and for children in our society.

Prayer

Creator God, in Christ you call man and woman to the fulness of glory for which you created them in your image. Heal our hardened hearts, renew our obedience to your will, and conform our lives to your gracious design. I ask this in trust and confidence through Jesus my brother. 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

