

During this unprecedented time in our world's history, we offer you the following material for your praying and reflecting on God's Word.

Introduction

"While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them 'Why are you frightened and why do doubts arise in your hearts?'"

It was the time after the death of Jesus. His disciples were in the upper room reflecting on the events that had just happened. They were locked in the room, scared as they were afraid of what the Jews might do to his disciples. They were already in fear but can you imagine the fear rise dramatically when Jesus appears to them? They were terrified and doubtful. Our current situation will create a lot of fear and doubt, some outright terror, but Jesus reminds us that we have a safe haven with him. He can take all our fears, our anxieties, our confusion, our doubtfulness and offer them up to God. Our hope and faith are found in God.

As we navigate a new normal with many restrictions, our spiritual lives do not need to suffer. There are still ways to observe this Holy season of Lent. The traditional practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving are still possible. It is imperative that during this time, we continue with our Lenten practices and to use this trial as an opportunity to elevate, adapt and deepen our relationship with Jesus.

Lectio Divina with the Sunday Gospel

Lectio Divina means 'divine reading'. It is a way to pray using the holy scriptures in a step-by-step process. Gather the entire family around and make the sign of the Cross. Light a candle.

Leader: "Holy Spirit, you inspired the authors of Sacred Scripture to write what you wanted us to know for the sake of our salvation. Inspire us now to hear those words not only with our ears, but our hearts, so that we might know your saving Word for us today."

- Read the scripture slowly and have a few moments of silence.
- Read the scripture again and choose a single word or short phrase that touches, speaks or surprises you. Share with everyone.
- Read the scripture one more time and discuss what is happening directly in the text.
- Meditate on what God is doing now in our lives through this text.
- Respond to what God is doing through prayer.
- Contemplate on what God is asking of me through this text and how to use these words as a gift for others through my actions.
- After a period of silence, end with the Sign of the Cross.

The Holy Gospel for March 22, 2020

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

“As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. He spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ Then the man who was blind went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, ‘Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?’ Some were saying, ‘It is he.’ Others were saying, ‘No, but it is someone like him.’ He kept saying, ‘I am the man.’

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. The Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, ‘He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.’

Some of the Pharisees said, ‘This man is not from god, for he does not observe the Sabbath.’ But others said ‘How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?’ And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, ‘What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened?’ He said, ‘He is a Prophet.’

They answered him, ‘You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?’ And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out and when he found him, he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ He answered, ‘And who is he, sir? Tell me so that I may believe in him.’

Jesus said to him, ‘You have seen him and the one speaking with you is he.’ He said, ‘Lord, I believe.’ And he worshipped him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Family Activities

In order for parents to help their children follow the light of Christ, they too must open their eyes. As Jesus helped the blind man understand, it is not enough to see only with our eyes. We need also to see with our hearts and allow our every action to reflect this sight. Jesus healed the man of his blindness, but in the end the man recognized Jesus as the Messiah and worshiped him.

~ Make an effort today (or sometime this week) to really see God in our lives. This may take some time and deliberation, but take a walk together and look for signs of God in the beauty of nature. Talk about ways God has helped you see with your heart, and suggest ways you can share the sight of your heart with others.

~ As a family, identify significant moments in your life, especially in the life of faith. Invite each person to reflect upon who Jesus was to him or her at each significant moment. How has each person's relationship with Jesus changed or matured? Note how the relationship between Jesus and the man born blind changes and grows throughout the Gospel.

~ Reflection - Consider:

My eyes were really opened when...

The hardest thing for me about being blind would be...

The most precious thing I've seen with my heart is...

How do you see differently because you believe?

General Intercessions

Let us offer up to God our prayers and needs:

1. God of great mercy and compassion. We pray for the Church, called and created by God to be a radical sign of God's reign in the world today. For our willingness to be shaped and fashioned by our God for our good and the good of all creation. We Pray to the Lord.

2. God of justice and lover of mercy. We pray for world leaders and officials responsible for the common good of all people. We pray for moral and ethical government practices and policies that protect the dignity of all. We Pray to the Lord.

3. God of human dignity and right living. We pray for an end to all forms of violence and actions of hate that break down and destroy human freedom and dignity. We pray for places that no longer know safety and peace as a way of living. We pray for the physical well-being of our global community as world health officials battle the ever-spreading COVID-19. We Pray to the Lord.

4. God of all that we see. We pray that in this new year of 2020 we may be given clarity of vision and the ability to discern what is right and true. We pray for the grace to shape our lives on that which will only lead to a deeper and more fruitful life in you. We Pray to the Lord.

5. God of eternal life. We pray for all who have died and gone before us. May eternal rest be granted unto them, and may perpetual light shine upon them. We Pray to the Lord.

Gathering all of our prayers and petitions into one we pray as Jesus taught us...

Our Father, who art in heaven....

Closing Prayer

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for insights gained, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

**Father of mercy and kindness,
your loving Son Jesus responded with his heart
to an individual outside of the mainstream.**

**He led the blind man into the community,
giving to both him and the community
new eyes, new vision, new hope.**

**We praise and thank you for this marvellous lesson
and ask your help as we try to follow
in Jesus' footsteps.**

**Help us to discover our own blindness
and to rejoice in the new vision we receive
when we act to overcome that blindness.**

**We ask this through Christ our Lord
and in the Holy Spirit. Amen.**