

Scripture – Third Week of Lent

Matthew 11:2-5

When John heard in prison of the works of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to him with this question, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?” Jesus said to them in reply, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.”

Reflection

As prophesied in the writings of Isaiah, the signs of the establishment of the reign of God will be signs of healing: “Say to the fearful of heart: Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God; he comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall see, and the ears of the deaf be opened; Then the lame shall leap like a stag, and the mute tongue sing for joy. (Isaiah 35: 4-6)

Jesus’ credentials are not just what he says – although it is wise – but what he does: heals the sick, the blind, the deaf and the lame; he proclaims the good news by feeding the hungry and raising the dead. Jesus thereby calls on us to create this better world too.

- What works do you see in your community – church or civil – which continue the healing works of Jesus?
- What works do you think should be present in a community that professes to proclaim the onset of the reign of God?
- Is there anything you can personally do to be an instrument of Jesus’ healing and forgiveness?

Prayer



Detail from James Tissot's *Jesus Healing the Blind and Lame*
Image in the Public Domain; Wikipedia Commons

O Healing Lord, I desire to follow you, living the Good News by my actions and my words, reaching out to others in healing and service.

Help me to follow you even if this indeed brings to the cross.

We adore you, O Christ and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Amen.

The Cross that Heals

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life, I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20

Content for this supplemental Lenten Study comes from the Archdiocese of Portland's Office of Life, Justice & Peace, USCCB and Parish Faith Formation Team

What We Believe:

- ◆ "Every day Christians pray for justice and mercy in the prayer that Jesus taught us: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Every day Christians recognize both that we are guilty of sin and that we are forgiven: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." This common prayer, the Lord's Prayer, recognizes our failures and offenses, and acknowledges our dependence on God's love and mercy.
- ◆ Just as God never abandons us, so too we must be in covenant with one another. We are all sinners, and our response to sin and failure should not be abandonment and despair, but rather justice, contrition, reparation, and return or reintegration of all into the community.
- ◆ The New Testament builds on this tradition and extends it. Jesus demonstrated his disappointment with those who oppressed others (Mt 23) and those who defiled sacred spaces (Jn 2). At the same time, he rejected punishment for its own sake, noting that we are all sinners (Jn 8). Jesus also rejected revenge and retaliation and was ever hopeful that offenders would transform their lives and turn to be embraced by God's love.
- ◆ We are guided by the paradoxical Catholic teaching on crime and punishment: We will not tolerate the crime and violence that threatens the lives and dignity of our sisters and brothers, and we will not give up on those who have lost their way. We seek both justice and mercy. Working together, we believe our faith calls us to protect public safety, promote the common good, and restore community.

Reflection:

Crime and the Catholic Community

Many of our parishes dramatically reflect the human and other costs of so much crime. The church doors are locked; the microphones hidden. Parishes spend more on bars for their windows than on flowers for their altars. More tragically, they bury young people caught in gang violence, the drug trade, or the hopelessness that leads children to take their own lives. These parishes reach out to prisoners and their families, offering help and hope to those caught up in crime and the criminal justice system. They also struggle to respond to the needs of crime victims: the parents who lose a child, the elderly woman who is mugged, the shopkeeper who is robbed, the child whose parent is in jail..."

Excerpts from *Responsibility, Rehabilitation and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice, USCCB, 2000*

Question:

How is the Cross that heals carried in your life, your family and your Parish?

Suggested actions:

- Read entire US Bishops' document: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/criminal-justice-restorative-justice/crime-and-criminal-justice.cfm#mission>
- Pray the Our Father for people who need healing in their lives.



At the foot of the cross, here I am Lord.