

Resources for your News

Sunday, 4 February 2018

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Mark 1:29-39

This passage contains three stories and there is food for thought in each of them.

1. The first story (vv. 29-31) is one of healing. You might reflect on times when you were sick in body, mind or spirit and someone was a 'Jesus person' to you, someone who 'took you by the hand and lifted you up'. Remember them with gratitude. Have there been times also when you did this for others?
2. The second story (vv. 32-34) adds another dimension. People are freed from demons. Have you had the experience of being freed from demons that imprisoned you: fear, anxiety, guilt, low self-esteem, addictions, bitterness, etc.? What was it like for you to get that freedom? Who were the 'Jesus people' who helped to free you?
3. The third story (vv. 35-39) has a number of different elements we can consider
 - a) Jesus goes off to a desert place to pray. After a hectic day he felt the need for quiet to ground himself once more. In the busyness of life how do you keep in touch with what is going on inside yourself? How do you keep in touch with God? Where do you find your 'deserted place'? What difference does it make for you when you do succeed in taking time out?
 - B) Jesus shows himself as a person seeking to break new ground. The disciples want him to continue ministry where he is. He wants to move on. What has been your experience of breaking new ground, moving beyond your comfort zone, or trying something you had not tried before? When has this had a life-giving effect for you?

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MUSINGS

In speaking about the merciful outreach of the Church, in his first official interview with the Jesuit Antonio Spadaro, Pope Francis compared the Church to a field hospital: 'I see the church as a field hospital after battle... the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity.' Using simple but effective imagery, he brings home his point that before getting into details about the dos and don'ts of the Christian life, it's important to make sure we are conveying the central message and reality: 'it is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds ... And you have to start from the ground up.'

Bishop Brendan Leahy, 'Mercy, the Church and Society, in Mary McCaughey, ed., *Merciful Like the Father*



Sunday, 11 February 2018

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Mark 1:40-45

1. Jesus' compassion for people suffering was an outstanding characteristic of his ministry. We see the healing power of God at work through him. Recall times when the compassion of others has had a healing effect on you. Remember also when your compassion towards someone in trouble brought them hope, healing or strength.
2. 'If you choose, you can make me clean'. Our choice is a key factor in how we affect others. We cannot choose to have no impact on the people in our lives. Even a choice to do nothing has an effect. When have you been particularly aware of the importance of your choice to be a positive influence on another?
3. Lepers were forced to live away from others. The leper's cure meant that he was also readmitted to contact with the community. Perhaps you recall people who were once ostracized being brought back into family or community. Who was the Jesus person who helped this healing to take place?
4. The joy of the leper on being healed was such that he could not keep the good news to himself. Bring to mind occasions when you were so filled with good news that you could not keep it to yourself?

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MUSINGS

[in the parable of the Prodigal Son] The younger son represented the poor who failed to keep the law, and the elder son represented the Pharisees who tried to abide by the law. The younger son felt he was under a curse because he had failed to observe the law. The elder son believed that he had earned his father's favour by being dutiful and observing the law at all times. However, Jesus said that both sons were mistaken. They presumed that the father's (i.e. God's) love was conditional and had to be earned by good behaviour, whereas in actual fact it was a free, unmerited gift. Both sons were invited to the kind of conversion that leads to a change in their thinking about their father and to trust in the offer of his unconditional mercy and love. Whereas the younger son was able to change his image of his father, the elder son seemed to be unable to do so.

Fr Pat Collins, *Encountering Jesus: New Evangelisation in Practice*



Sunday, 18 February 2018

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

John 1:12-15

1. Jesus he is about to start his public ministry. Mark tells us this was preceded by a deep inner struggle when his resolve to take on his God-given mission was tested. Recall important decisions in your own life. Were they accompanied by struggle and doubt? Who were the angels who supported you at that time? Give thanks for them.
2. Such periods of anxiety may seem like wilderness experiences at the time. Later, with hindsight, we may see them as being good for us. Perhaps, like Jesus, you recall a time when the Spirit of God led you into the wilderness to be tested and after the experience you had a clearer sense of your own identity or your purpose in life?
3. *Repent and believe the good news* was the heart of the message of Jesus. It was not a call to penance but to a change of heart, a change of attitude, leading to a change in behaviour. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of right relationships: with God, with one another, with creation, with ourselves. It is a change that leads to a fuller life. When have you found that a change in your attitude towards God, others, yourself, or the world around you, has led you to a more fulfilled or more fruitful life?
4. There is immediacy about the call of Jesus: *'the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near'*. Recall when you had a realisation that NOW was the moment of opportunity – for a change in your life, for a spiritual renewal, or a time to give a wholehearted *yes* to life. At this moment to what do you believe you are invited to say *'yes'*?

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MUSINGS

Between his baptism in the Jordan and the beginning of his preaching, Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness. Mark's Gospel gives us a succinct account of the event: The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness and he remained there for forty days, and was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild beasts and the angels looked after him.

As Lent begins we are perhaps unwilling to enter into it fully but if, driven by the Spirit, we do follow Jesus into the wilderness, we may find that we come to terms with temptation and discover a certain freedom. Temptation is essentially about taking the easy way out. It is always easier to follow our inclinations than to be faithful to our promises and our principles. Until, that is, we realize what is at stake. Taking the easy way out of every difficult situation does not bring peace. It is an expression of despair.

Fr James O'Kane, *Shortish Homilies for 2017/18 (Year B)*.

Part 1: *Advent to Pentecost*



Sunday, 25 February 2018

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Mark 9:2-10

1. Some special spiritual experiences are well nigh impossible to describe in words. The Transfiguration was one of these. Jesus had a new and deeper insight into his relationship with his heavenly Father, one that would sustain him through what lay ahead of him. Have you had WOW moments that you found hard to describe to others? How have these sustained you in difficult times?
2. It can be both scary and wonderful to witness transformation in another, especially a person who is close. At times parents get a taste of this when a child's talent blossoms and is recognised by the child. We may also experience it when a dear friend recognises s/he is in a blind alley and gives up an addiction.
3. 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him.' Peter, James and John were particularly close to Jesus but they were not good at listening to Jesus, especially when he spoke of the painful road of servant discipleship. Jesus is the one we must listen to, even when his message is hard to hear, for it is in this message we find life. When have you found this to be true?
4. Strangely, this instruction came to the disciples when they were confused and 'in a cloud'. Perhaps you recall a moment of insight coming to you at a time when you were confused.

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MUSINGS

For some we [priests] are the doorkeepers of a living tradition of faith-life that responds to the most powerful human commitment of all – namely, to the transcendent, to the absolute, to God. In this we might even be regarded as figures of holiness, generosity, paternal care, sanctity, virtue, benevolence, devotion, and so on. For others, however, we are viewed in an entirely different way: and we can be treated as power mongers, control freaks, and even parasites that belong to another time and to another world ... It is not easy to stand in a place that can evoke such diverse and powerful human reactions. There must be something visceral and, indeed, extraordinary about our lives, when others can see us through lenses of such polar opposition, and when they can project such powerful human sentiments onto us... In our culture we stand in the strangest of places, and we need, I believe, to understand this and our relationship to the institution that is the Church if we are to remain relatively at peace.

Michael Conway, *The Furrow*, September 2017

