

Daily Readings and Reflections

Month of Mini-Retreats

Week 3

The Proclamation of the Kingdom

Sunday, July 15

Reading

When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Matthew 7:28-29

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. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me.”

Matthew 11:2-6

All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables. He spoke to them only in parables, to fulfill what had been said through the prophet:

“I will open my mouth in parables,

I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation [of the world].”

Matthew 13:34-35

Reflection

In the three passages above we see that Jesus was recognized as the Messiah through his teachings, his miracles, and his parables. This is also how we get to know Jesus now. The more we learn about his teachings, miracles, and parables the more we begin to recognize him in our daily lives. As we start to live out his teachings, we will see him transform our thoughts, our hearts, and our relationships. As we learn more about his miracles, we will see how he performs miracles, great and small, in our lives. As we listen and meditate on his parables, we will start to see the world through his eyes.

Meditation

- How has knowledge of Jesus’ teachings, miracles, and parables helped me to recognize him in my daily life?
- How can I add reading or listening to the Bible into my daily routine so that I can get to know Jesus through his teachings, miracles, and parables?

Monday, July 16

Reading

“You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they

light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

Matthew 5:13-16

Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 8:12

Reflection

Jesus is the light of the world and it is through us, His Body, that his light shines. We are the light of the world, because he chooses to be the light of the world through us. We are called to show the world who Jesus is, but we cannot do this unless we know him ourselves. When we learn what Jesus teaches and allow his teachings to become part of who we are, then we cannot help but shine in a world plagued with darkness. When we humbly do our good deeds led by Jesus' teachings and for the glory of God, we become beacons of hope in this world. Our light, our good deeds, will draw people to God.

Meditation

- How has the Light of Christ shining through someone else drawn me closer to God?
- How can I be a light in the world through my daily activities and everyday duties?

Tuesday, July 17

Reading

"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few.

Matthew 7:13-14

So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came [before me] are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.

John 10:7-10

Reflection

When we first read these passages we might ask ourselves, "Why is the gate narrow and the road constricted? Why is the gate so hard to find? Doesn't Jesus want us to find The Gate, find him?" But if we really think about it, we will realize that Jesus is trying to free us. The gate is narrow because Jesus is merciful. It is tempting to pick things up as we travel through life. An anxiety here, a bad habit there. It all adds up, and it weighs us down. It is precisely these things that we must put down to enter through The Gate that leads to life. Jesus wants us to find rest in him. If we are juggling fears, sins, and unhealthy attachments like a bunch of bags and suitcases, then we end up too distracted to look for The Gate and we end up too bulky to fit through The Gate. Jesus does not want this for our lives. The gate is narrow, because he want us to let go of the baggage that weighs us down. And letting go of the baggage is how we have life more abundantly.

Meditation

- What fears, sins, or unhealthy attachments are weighing me down?
- How can I allow Jesus help me to let go of the baggage that keeps me from having life more abundantly?

Wednesday, July 18

Reading

While he was saying these things to them, an official came forward, knelt down before him, and said, "My daughter has just died. But come, lay your hand on her, and she will live." Jesus rose and followed him, and so did his disciples. A woman suffering hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the tassel on his cloak. She said to herself, "If only I can touch his cloak, I shall be cured." Jesus turned around and saw her, and said, "Courage, daughter! Your faith has saved you." And from that hour the woman was cured. When Jesus arrived at the official's house and saw the flute players and the crowd who were making a commotion, he said, "Go away! The girl is not dead but sleeping." And they ridiculed him. When the crowd was put out, he came and took her by the hand, and the little girl arose. And news of this spread throughout all that land.

Matthew 9:18-26

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

John 11:25-26

Reflection

In the second passage today we read the words Jesus spoke to Lazarus' sister, Martha, before he raised Lazarus from the dead. The things we learn about Jesus from his miracles in the first passage are beautifully paralleled and illuminated in his words to Martha. Just as our baptism is an outward sign of the spiritual reality, so too is the healing of the suffering woman. It was not just her body that was saved but also her soul. When we read Jesus' words to the woman, "Your faith has saved you," we should hear him telling us that "everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." Just as the hemorrhaging woman eventually died a bodily death, so too will our bodies die. But Jesus never does anything partially. We were not given a body and a spirit so that only one would be saved. Jesus shows us his power over physical death in raising the official's daughter and Lazarus from the dead. When Jesus says, "The girl is not dead but sleeping," he is not denying that the girl had died. He is pointing out the temporariness of bodily death for those who have faith in him. So, when we read this we should hear him telling us that "whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live." Thus, our courage in this life comes from believing in him who is the Resurrection and the Life, because at the end of this life and at the end of all time our imperfect bodies and sin-stained souls will be healed and perfected by him.

Meditation

- Whether I approach Jesus timidly, as the suffering woman did, or confidently, as the official did, do I approach him with faith?
- How does my belief in Jesus give me courage?

Thursday, July 19

Reading

Moving on from there Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, went up on the mountain, and sat down there. Great crowds came to him, having with them the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute, and many others. They placed them at his feet, and he cured them. The crowds were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the deformed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind able to see, and they glorified the God of Israel.

Matthew 15:29-31

Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

John 14:6-7

Reflection

All of the infirmities that keep us from the Father are healed by him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He was sent by the Father to heal the spiritual lameness, blindness, deformities, and muteness that result from sin and keep us from the Father. Jesus heals the lame, so they can walk the way and come to the Father. He heals the blind, so that they can see the Father. He heals the mute, so they can announce the truth and others can know the Father. He heals the deformed, so they can have life and glorify the Father. No matter what is keeping us from the Father, we can place it at Jesus' feet and he will heal us. Then he will guide us in truth along the way that leads to eternal life.

Meditation

- What spiritual infirmities do I need to lay at the feet of Jesus so that I can be healed?
- Once I have laid my spiritual infirmities at the feet of Jesus, how can I keep from picking them back up?

Friday, July 20

Reading

“See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father. What is your opinion? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray? And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost. Matthew 18:10-14

I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep.

John 10:11-15

Reflection

Distractions, bad habits, and letting our priorities get out of order can cause us to stray from the Father, almost without realizing it. Other times our fears - fear of changing our lives, fear of what others will think, fear of stepping outside of our comfort zones - are like wolves chasing us away from the Father. No matter what causes the distance, it is the Father's will that we would all be brought into the fold and find rest in him. This is why he sent Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Jesus loves us enough to come find us, to fight off the wolves, and to lay his life down for us. No matter where we are in our lives and no matter what our wolves are, the Good Shepherd seeks us out and protects us so that we may be united with the Father.

Meditation

- What things in my life have caused me to gradually go astray?
- What are my wolves? What are the things that scare me away from living my life completely for God?

Saturday, July 21

Reading

What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him? Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who acquits us. Who will condemn? It is Christ [Jesus] who died, rather, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?

As it is written:

“For your sake we are being slain all the day;
we are looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:31-39

Reflection

God gives us everything in Jesus. This is revealed to us in the Gospels through Jesus' teachings, miracles, and parables, and by knowing these things we can see him revealed to us every day of our lives. He is the Light to guide us. He is the Way upon which we will find Truth. When we inevitably stray, he is the Shepherd who lovingly guides us back and lays down his life so that we may have true Life. And at the end of all time, he will be the Resurrection that will unite us completely and finally with God. So who is Jesus? He is everything.

Meditation

Spend a few moments re-reading St. Paul's words to the Romans, and meditating on God's great love for you.