

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT



Daily Offering

Bless this day, Lord Jesus. May all I think or do or say be in your Holy Name.

Tony Nye SJ

Entering into Prayer

Choose a way to enter into prayer from earlier in Lent or any method that you prefer.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Then Jesus said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, “Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.” So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, “How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.’” So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” But the father said to his slaves, “Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!” And they began to celebrate. ‘Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, “Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.” Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, “Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!” Then the father said to him, “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.”’



Image for the Day

The Prodigal Son

by

Rembrandt

What do you see in this image? How does it make you feel? Does this parable help your image of God, or is it a hindrance? Talk to Jesus about that.

Food for Thought

Today's Gospel might best be described as the parable of the generous father and his two lost sons. A son who left home and returned and another son who was always "at home" – or was he? The father divides his property equally between the two sons, keeping nothing for himself – literally: "he divided his life between them." The father represents God's boundless grace, and the two sons embody the different attitudes that prevent us from experiencing God's abundance. The younger son is lost in his wasteful lifestyle, and the older son is lost in self-righteousness. The younger son thinks of himself as a servant, a sinner, who can never again be accepted as a son. He makes the first move, turning around and moving toward the father. That's all he needed to do. The father's joy in response creates a scene of overwhelming love and forgiveness. Though the son seems identified with the stigma of his sin, the fine robe, the ring, the sandals and the feast all proclaim the lost sinner as the father's true son.

The older son has been "out in the field." But the father who ran towards one lost son now comes out after the other lost son. The older son complains, "All these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders." He doesn't see himself as a son but as his father's servant who obeys his commands. Rather than living the joyful life of a beloved son, he has become a self-pitying victim, filled with bitter resentment.

Suggestions for Prayer

As you read the parable, is there a phrase that speaks directly to you? Place yourself in the situation of each son, and consider how you respond to the generous love of the father.

Jesus' parable addresses two groups mentioned at the start. The tax collectors and sinners are mirrored in the attitude of the younger son. The Pharisees and scribes are mirrored in the mind-set of the older son. Yet the parable is addressed to us all. We are all lost children who have been found by our Father. Do we have a slave mentality that deprives us of joy in our Father's presence? Do we identify ourselves with our past sins and so are unable to accept that we are really sons and daughters, or do we follow orders with obedience and can't believe that the Father's love is unmerited and free?

What prevents you from experiencing and celebrating the abundant love of God? To experience the Father's forgiveness, all we have to do is turn back in the direction of God. We never have to crawl back or make up for our past. When we turn back, God's love meets us more than halfway.

How are you going to respond today?

In what way does God want you to turn back to him this Lent? Imagine the ecstatic joy of the father who spotted his son walking towards him. Place yourself in that scene and savour God's wildly joyful love for you.

Examen (review of prayer)

When you come towards the end of your time of prayer, or at the end of your day, talk to God about what has come up for you, what went well and what didn't.

MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK



Daily Offering

Lord I offer you my generosity. Let me never see a need without doing something about it.

Chris Brolly SJ

Entering into Prayer

Choose a way to enter into prayer from earlier in Lent or any method that you prefer.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

John 4:43-54

When the two days were over, he went from that place to Galilee (for Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honour in the prophet's own country). When he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, since they had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the festival; for they too had gone to the festival.

Then he came again to Cana in Galilee where he had changed the water into wine. Now there was a royal official whose son lay ill in Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Then Jesus said to him, 'Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.' The official said to him, 'Sir, come down before my little boy dies.' Jesus said to him, 'Go; your son will live.' The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started on his way. As he was going down, his slaves met him and told him that his child was alive. So he asked them the hour when he began to recover, and they said to him, 'Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him.' The father realized that this was the hour when Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live.' So he himself believed, along with his whole household. Now this was the second sign that Jesus did after coming from Judea to Galilee.





The Court Official's Son
by
James Tissot

Image for the Day

What do you see in this image?

How does this story and picture help you reflect on faith, humility and healing?

Food for Thought

In today's Gospel we hear of an official at the court of Herod Antipas. As you read the Gospel, try to put yourself in the official's shoes. He hears about Jesus and sets off for Cana, a day's walk, about 20 miles uphill, to ask Jesus to come down to Capernaum to heal his dying son. Even though he is a royal official with authority, he is powerless to prevent his son from dying. In his need he walks about 20 miles uphill to ask a carpenter for help! What does that tell you about this official? He believes – or at least hopes – that Jesus has the power to heal his son.

The official does not respond to Jesus' words about signs and wonders, he has only one thing on his mind, the life of his child. He accepts Jesus' word that his son is healed, even though this is not something he can immediately verify. How do you think he felt? There is no visible sign or wonder to testify to a healing; there is only Jesus' word that his son lives. The official believes Jesus' word and acts on it by going home.

When the master's son unexpectedly gets well, his servants set out for Cana to tell him. They meet him on the road as he is returning home and give him the good news that his son would live. The official does not express surprise that his son has recovered from his life-threatening illness, for he believed Jesus' word. Instead he asks when it occurred. They tell him and the father realizes that the boy recovered at the very time that Jesus said he would. This confirms for the official what he had taken on faith.

The official is not named and does not reappear in this Gospel, yet he is held up as a model of faith. Even though he wanted Jesus to come to Capernaum to heal his son, he accepted Jesus' word that his son would live, despite there being nothing to immediately verify it. He acted on Jesus' word, going back to Capernaum. He realized the significance of Jesus' restoration of life to his son; he came to believe that Jesus is the source of life. He shared his belief with those closest to him, bringing his whole household to faith.

Suggestions for Prayer

Have you had faith-testing moments in your life? How did you respond? How is the official a model of faith for you? What kind of faith are you being called to this Lent? Today? How do you feel about sharing your faith with others? Ask Jesus for what you most need at this present time.

How are you going to respond today?

Consider a way in which you can show or share your faith today. If you can, reach out to others whose faith in God (or other people) may be tested, to strengthen them.

Examen (review of prayer)

At the end of your prayer you can look back and ask: Does it have something to say to you? How does it make you feel? Imagine how God might reply.

Conversation: When you come towards the end of your time of prayer, talk to God about what has come up for you. End with a formal prayer, such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK



Daily Offering

Lord, I offer my work today. May it help me come closer to you.

Stephen Noon SJ

Entering into Prayer

Choose a way to enter into prayer from earlier in Lent or any method that you prefer.

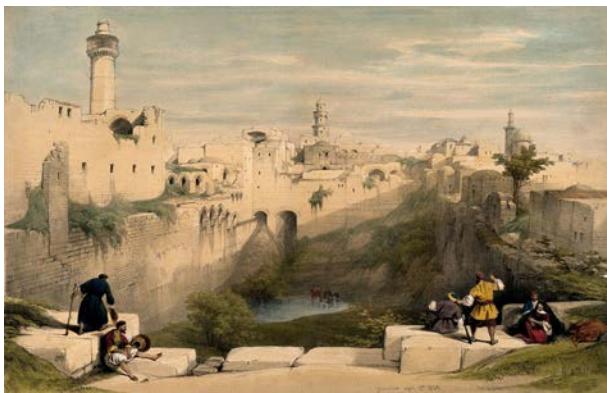
TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

John 5:1-3, 5-16

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Bethzatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids - blind, lame, and paralysed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be made well?' The sick man answered him, 'Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.' Jesus said to him, 'Stand up, take your mat and walk.' At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

Now that day was a sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, 'It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.' But he answered them, 'The man who made me well said to me, "Take up your mat and walk." ' They asked him, 'Who is the man who said to you, "Take it up and walk"?' Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, 'See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.' The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath.





The Pool at Bethesda
19th century sketch

Image for the Day

What do you see in this image?

How does this story help you reflect on your need for, or experience of, healing?

Food for Thought

The name Bethesda is traditionally interpreted to mean “house of mercy”, but a reference to this pool in the Dead Sea Scrolls suggests it probably means “place of two reservoirs.” Recent excavations revealed two pools side-by-side, with five porticoes along their sides and between them. One pool was a ritual bath for the many Jews who came to Jerusalem for feasts and who needed to ritually bathe to purify themselves in order to be able to enter the inner precincts of the Temple. This pool was periodically filled by a flow of water from the other pool, which may account for the water being “stirred up.” Some believed that the first person into the pool after its waters were stirred would be healed. Many ill, blind, lame and crippled people came to the porticoes in the hope of healing. Their infirmities made it difficult for them to work and support themselves. They were reduced to begging from pilgrims.

Imagine Jesus coming to this place near the temple and he meets people with chronic illness, the ones that the temple did not want. The gospel does not tell us why he came to the pool, we’re simply told that Jesus saw a man who had been ill for thirty-eight years lying there. That’s a long time to be incapacitated – virtually a lifetime in terms of life expectancy at that time. The man was one of a “large number” of afflicted lying there, but Jesus focuses on him. Jesus knew he had been ill for a long time. When he saw him and knew his condition he said to him, “Do you want to be well again?”

You might say “what an odd question! Of course those who are ill want to get well, don’t they?” But Jesus asked the question knowing he had been ill for a long time. Had the man lived with his condition for so long that it had become part of his who he was, and a life free from his infirmity almost inconceivable? Was a different life, with the adjustments it entailed, a daunting prospect?

Suggestions for Prayer

There is a sense in which Jesus asks every one of us, Do you want to be well? Do I want to be freed of the sins and addictions that I have accommodated for so long that they are now part of my makeup? Do I want to leave my old self behind and become a new person?

How are you going to respond today?

For Jesus, nobody is unchangeable. He has great respect for each of us and believes we can always grow in freedom and in faith. Sometimes we prefer to remain as we are rather than change for the better. We fear what the change will bring, or we have grown comfortable with our “illness.” Imagine Jesus asking you, right now, “Do you want to be well?” What is your response?

Examen (review of prayer)

At the end of your prayer you can look back and ask: Does it have something to say to you? How does it make you feel? Imagine how God might reply.

Conversation: When you come towards the end of your time of prayer, talk to God about what has come up for you. End with a formal prayer, such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK



Daily Offering

Jesus, may my life today be drawn from you, the Vine: may I live and love as you would wish.

Tom Shufflebotham SJ

Entering into Prayer

Choose a way to enter into prayer from earlier in Lent or any method that you prefer.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

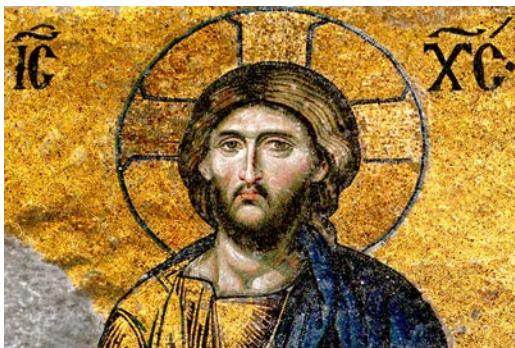
John 5:17-30

But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is still working, and I also am working.’ For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.

Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomsoever he wishes. The Father judges no one but has given all judgement to the Son, so that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. Anyone who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him. Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgement, but has passed from death to life.

‘Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; and he has given him authority to execute judgement, because he is the Son of Man. Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

‘I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgement is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me.



Mosaic of Christ
from Hagia Sophia

Image for the Day

Do you identify with this image of Jesus, or do you see him in a different way? Talk to Jesus about that. Perhaps spend a few moments contemplating Jesus as you see him.

Food for Thought

Jesus' relationship to God was threatening to those who saw God differently. Jesus carries out works on the Sabbath and speaks of God as a loving father with whom he relates closely, confidently. He says to those who accuse him of making himself equal to God "My Father goes on working, and so do I."

Jesus says: "the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees the Father doing." In the society of the time, sons normally took up the work of their fathers, whether it was farming or fishing, carpentry or another trade. There were no trade schools. The only way a son could learn how to carry on his father's work was by observing what he did and imitating him. Similarly, Jesus the Son "can do only what he sees the Father doing." Jesus does not act independently. Jesus sees his Father as no one else can and knows what he is doing. Jesus does only what his Father does and in today's reading he spells this out with a number of statements that begin with the word "for." Look out for them. What do they tell you about the relationship of Jesus and the Father? Whatever his Father is doing, Jesus is likewise doing. There is a difference, though, between any son imitating his father and Jesus doing what his Father is doing. While a son may observe his father and then imitate his actions, Jesus and his Father are so intimately united to each other that they act simultaneously in what they do. The Father acts through his Son; the works of the Son are the work of his Father. Jesus goes on to say that he will show works "that will astonish you" and that he has come to bring us "from death to life."

Suggestions for Prayer

Notice Jesus' striking statement "My Father goes on working, and so do I." God is present among us now; can you sense His presence in your life today? Have there been times in your life, perhaps on this Lenten journey so far, when God has astonished you?

Such is the unity of the Father and Jesus that the work of one is the work of the other. Think about this for a moment: Jesus trusts me enough to call me into the same closeness and intimacy with God. How do I respond to that trust?

How are you going to respond today?

At the end of today's reading Jesus says: "My aim is to do not my own will, but the will of him who sent me." As Holy Week approaches, we are reminded of Jesus' prayer in the garden to his Father: "Not my will, but yours be done." Can I share in that prayer, by praying the Our Father and reflecting particularly on the words "Your will be done, on earth as in heaven."

Examen (review of prayer)

Sit or stand and let God look at you. Breathe in God's love. Breathe out into God how you are right now. Ask for God's light as you look over the day. What makes you glad? Breathe it in. What makes you sad? Let yourself feel it. Do not be afraid. Breathe in God's love.

What do you need to help you? Let God know.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, Amen.

THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK



Daily Offering

Father of Mercy, I pause for a moment to consider your love for me. May your merciful love give me renewed hope and strength, ready to cooperate in your mission each and every day.

[Via Click to Pray](#)

Entering into Prayer

Choose a way to enter into prayer from earlier in Lent or any method that you prefer.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

John 5:31-47

“If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that his testimony to me is true. You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth. Not that I accept such human testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But I have a testimony greater than John's. The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent.

‘You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. I do not accept glory from human beings. But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?’





John the Baptist
by
José Leonardo

Image for the Day

What do you see in this picture of John the Baptist?
How do figures like John the Baptist help our faith?
Do we ever point the way like he did for others?

Food for Thought

Have you ever been in a courtroom? Have you ever been called as a witness? What was that experience like for you? The context of today's reading is that Jesus is accused of making himself equal to God. The Jewish authorities are seeking the death penalty. In his defence, Jesus calls several witnesses on his behalf.

Jesus points out that "Were I to testify on my own behalf, my testimony would not be valid." In Jewish legal proceedings, a defendant's unsupported testimony was not considered evidence, so Jesus calls other witnesses. Several witnesses were required when the death penalty was involved. Jesus calls first on John the Baptist. Jesus then points to the works that he himself does as well as to the Father, the Scriptures and Moses.

Jesus reminds his accusers of what they have seen and the witnesses they have heard. One obstacle blocking Jesus' accusers from believing in him is their love of being honoured and praised, of receiving the approval of others. Jesus' stresses that his honour does not lie in how others look upon him but in how his Father looks upon him.

Suggestions for Prayer

Jesus' mention of the specific obstacles preventing people from believing in him did not apply to all Jews of his time, much less to all people of all time, nor are they a complete list of obstacles to belief. His words do, however, invite me to examine my heart. What are the obstacles to my belief in Jesus? Jesus knows us through and through. He focuses on the potential in each of us. But that potential comes to fulfilment only when we get to know him. Do I seek the approval of others too much, forgetting where my true value lies? When have I compromised my beliefs because of social pressure? St Ignatius was a wise old bird in the manner of relating with God. "Don't rush into it" he would say. "Instead, first consider how God is looking at you." The Spanish word is *mirar* which signifies a steady gaze, and it is a gaze of love, a contemplative gaze. The word "admire" is drawn from the word *mirar*, "to gaze." Could it be that God actually admires me? After all, am I not his handiwork....? Such is the unity of the Father and Jesus that the work of one is the work of the other. Think about this for a moment: Jesus trusts me enough to call me into the same closeness and intimacy with God. How do I respond to that trust?

How are you going to respond today?

Just as John the Baptist prepared the way of Jesus by his testimony and by the way he lived, some people we meet make it easier for us to recognize Jesus. Who has been, or is today, a John the Baptist figure in my life? How can I be like him for others?

Examen (review of prayer)

Lord,
let me be still and at peace,
just for a few moments, in the busy-ness of my day.
Let me be attentive to where I have been and where I am headed.
And let me see where you have been present in my life today. Amen

Fr Adrian Porter SJ

FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK



Daily Offering

Creator of all things in heaven and on earth, direct my attention to your presence in creation.

Kensy Joseph SJ

Entering into Prayer

Using an object

Hold an object: a stone, leaf, cross, anything you like. Weigh it, feel it, look at it. It is a part of creation and loved by God.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him. Now the Jewish festival of Booths [Tabernacles] was near.

But after his brothers had gone to the festival, then he also went, not publicly but as it were in secret.

Now some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, ‘Is not this the man whom they are trying to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, but they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Messiah? Yet we know where this man is from; but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.’ Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, ‘You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me.’ Then they tried to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come.





Jesus preaching in the Temple
by Jan Polack

Image for the Day

Do you find this image of Jesus preaching helpful?
What do you see in the image?
Talk to God about that.

Food for Thought

The last time Jesus was in Jerusalem in Judea, Jewish authorities sought his death because he healed on the Sabbath and claimed that, just as his Father worked on the Sabbath, so did he. He is aware of the hostility of the Jewish authorities towards him and although he is avoiding Judea, the law of Moses called for pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles. Would he follow Jewish custom and attend the feast, or would he remain in the relative safety of Galilee? Jesus goes up to Jerusalem, but without drawing attention to himself.

Despite this, we next find him teaching in the Temple and attracting a crowd, some of whom – perhaps pilgrims just come to Jerusalem – are not aware that the authorities are seeking his death. Others are aware of the plot and are amazed that he is speaking openly despite the threat to his life.

Some say they know nothing about him, others that they know everything and so Jesus cannot be the Messiah. Some reject Jesus because they say “We all know where he comes from.” It is much easier having a carpenter around the place than the Messiah; it is much easier talking about broken chairs than broken lives. The temptation is to keep Jesus at the level they can handle him at; they want to keep him reasonably harmless.

Jesus knew throughout his passion where he came from – the heart of God the Father. He knew he would return there. He always knew he was not on his own.

Suggestions for Prayer

In the person of Jesus the mystery of God has a face, a voice, a language, a love, a life. In the Gospel we meet Jesus' friends and enemies, his enthusiasms and dislikes; we are caught up in his struggle for what is right; we are challenged to keep alive the values he cherished. Can I walk with Jesus in his passion of today? Take a moment to consider this.

It's human to find excuses not to believe, not to accept, not to follow God in Jesus. Do I prefer to keep Jesus at a harmless level? Who do I see when I look at Jesus? Who does Jesus see, when he looks at me?

How are you going to respond today?

No matter how much I know about somebody there always remains much which is hidden and known only to God. Can I pray for a deeper reverence towards those around me – especially for those I think I know well.

Examen (review of prayer)

With God: With God I review my day

Thanks: Where do I find joy?

Sorry: Where do I find sadness?

Please: What do I ask from God?

Amen;

Examen in twenty-five words

SATURDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK



Daily Offering

Lord I offer you my loyalty. Allow me to be a constant to others in an ever-changing world.

Chris Brolly SJ

Entering into Prayer

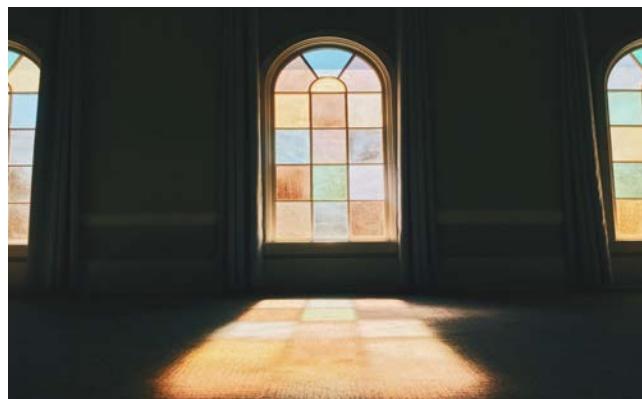
Recall a place where you feel at peace ... imagine it if you can ... or in some way get a sense of it... what do you notice about it ... let the Holy Spirit be there with you ... in the breeze or the air you breathe ...

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

John 7:40-52

When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, 'This is really the prophet.' Others said, 'This is the Messiah.' But some asked, 'Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he? Has not the scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?' So there was a division in the crowd because of him. Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, 'Why did you not arrest him?' The police answered, 'Never has anyone spoken like this!' Then the Pharisees replied, 'Surely you have not been deceived too, have you? Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, which does not know the law—they are accursed.' Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, 'Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?' They replied, 'Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee.'





Jesus and Nicodemus
by
Fritz von Uhde

Image for the Day

What do you see in this image?

Can you be with Jesus in the way that Nicodemus is here, attentive and listening?

Talk to God about all that is on your mind today.

Food for Thought

Continuing from yesterday's reading, the arguments about Jesus' origins continue among the people. In today's Gospel reading we hear of the guards who had been sent by the chief priests and Pharisees some days earlier to arrest Jesus. They now report back empty handed. When questioned why, the guards reply, "Never before has anyone spoken like this one." The Pharisees accuse them of being deceived. Furthermore, while the Pharisees think they themselves are above being deceived, they accuse the crowd of ignorance and of being accursed according to the Law. Nicodemus interrupts the smug mutterings of his fellow leaders and reminds them that the Law they are so keen to uphold does not condemn a person before first hearing him and finding out what he is doing. They cannot deny this, instead they heap abuse on Nicodemus and try to put him down by asking if he too is from Galilee. They tell him to look to Scripture and see that no prophet comes from Galilee – much less the Messiah. (Despite this confident claim, at least one prophet came from Galilee: "the prophet Jonah, son of Amitai, from Gath-hepher" (Jonah 1:1), a village about three miles from Nazareth. Those who urged Nicodemus to look at the record in Scripture should have first done so themselves!)

Finally, while they dismiss Jesus as a Galilean, his birthplace was Bethlehem in Judea and so he was from God: they are ignorant of his origin as about everything else. Ignorance is pardonable for those in the fallible human condition, but being dogmatic in one's ignorance and intolerant of the views of others is harder to forgive.

Suggestions for Prayer

Some people who heard Jesus could not believe that God might work powerfully in such ordinary and familiar circumstances. As I reflect on my own situation, can I recognise God at work in my daily life? Nicodemus is an honest man, ready to speak up for truth. When have I had the courage to speak up for someone who was being denigrated, put down or treated unfairly? What may I need to do to stand for justice?

How are you going to respond today?

When have I been absolutely sure of something only to find out later that I was wrong? How tolerant am I of those who see things differently than I do? Perhaps today I may find a way today or this week to stand up for justice in some way.

Examen (review of prayer)

At the end of your prayer you can look back and ask: Does it have something to say to you? How does it make you feel? Imagine how God might reply.

Conversation: When you come towards the end of your time of prayer, talk to God about what has come up for you. End with a formal prayer, such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.