

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

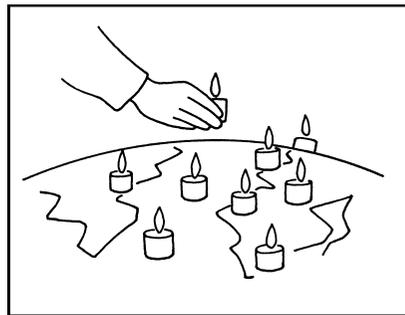
1. In what ways have you been able to share your faith with others?
2. What difficulties or opposition have you met in trying to share your faith? What helped you to overcome them?
3. What different ways of sharing the joy of the Gospel have you seen in your parish, in other parishes or in other Christian denominations?
4. What would you like to see offered in your parish that might help you share the Gospel with others?

Practical Evangelisation

Are there any practical steps which would make your parish buildings and what goes on in them more accessible to people with different disabilities?

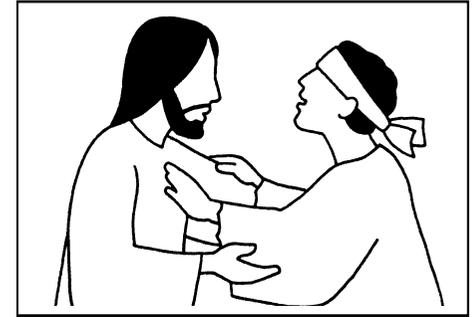
Prayer

Father,
You have blessed us in so many ways,
above all in the mercy and compassion
you have shown us
in the life, death and resurrection
of Jesus, your Son.
Keep us grateful every day
for your great and gentle love.
We don't always know how to bring people closer to you
and we would rather that it was someone else's job.
But we do know that you have poured your Holy Spirit into our hearts
and you are at work among us.
Take away the fear and embarrassment
that sometimes stops us speaking about you to others.
Make us sharers of Gospel Joy to those who most need to learn of you.
Amen.



The Joy of the Gospel *Walking through Lent* *with Pope Francis*

Fourth Sunday of Lent: *The Man Born Blind*



As Jesus went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. He spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man, and said to him, 'Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam' (a name that means 'sent'). So the blind man went off and washed himself, and came away with his sight restored.

His neighbours and people who earlier had seen him begging said, 'Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?' Some said, 'Yes, it is the same one.' Others said, 'No, he only looks like him.' The man himself said, 'I am the man.'

It had been a sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had come to see, he said, 'He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see.' Then some of the Pharisees said, 'This man cannot be from God: he does not keep the sabbath.' Others said, 'How could a sinner produce signs like this?' So they spoke to the blind man again, 'What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?' 'He is a prophet' replied the man.

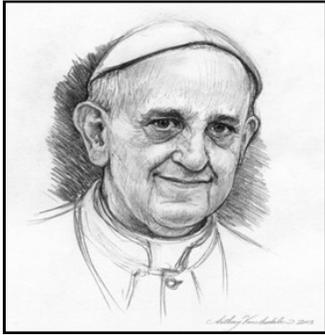
'Are you trying to teach us,' they replied 'and you a sinner through and through, since you were born!' And they drove him away.

Jesus heard they had driven him away, and when he found him he said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' 'Sir,' the man replied 'tell me who he is so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said, 'You are looking at him; he is speaking to you.' The man said, 'Lord, I believe', and worshipped him.

John 9:1-41 (shortened)

This Gospel shows real growth in faith. At first the man born blind had no idea who had cured him. His faith gets clearer as he is questioned. Jesus is at first just a man, then a prophet, and finally he is his Lord, the one he worships. He is able to stand up against the enemies of Jesus certain that he has been healed and saved from darkness. He is willing to stand up for his new faith.

Here are some passages from Pope Francis that challenge us to think about how seriously we are taking the call to share our faith with others.



To ponder: The blind man responded to the gift of sight by sharing his new faith with others, but many things can stop us from doing the same.

Pope Francis reflects:

In some people we see an ostentatious preoccupation for the liturgy, for doctrine and for the Church's prestige, but without any concern that the Gospel have a real impact on God's faithful people and the concrete needs of the present time. In this way, the life of the Church turns into a museum piece or something which is the property of a select few. In others, this spiritual

worldliness lurks behind a fascination with social and political gain, or pride in their ability to manage practical affairs, or an obsession with programmes of self-help and self-realization. It can also translate into a concern to be seen, into a social life full of appearances, meetings, dinners and receptions. It can also lead to a business mentality, caught up with management, statistics, plans and evaluations whose principal beneficiary is not God's people but the Church as an institution. The mark of Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen, is not present; closed and elite groups are formed, and no effort is made to go forth and seek out those who are distant or the immense multitudes who thirst for Christ. Evangelical fervour is replaced by the empty pleasure of complacency and self-indulgence. [95]

Question: Is sharing the Good News of God's mercy something we have forgotten about? Is it something important in my parish and in my life?

To ponder: The man born blind went round telling everyone about Jesus, but Christians sometimes want to pick and choose who receives the Good News.

Pope Francis reflects:

The salvation which God has wrought, and the Church joyfully proclaims, is for everyone ... No one is saved by himself or herself, individually, or by his or her own efforts. ... This people which God has chosen and called is the Church. Jesus did not tell the apostles to form an exclusive and elite group ... To those who feel far from God and the Church, to all those who are fearful or indifferent, I would like to say this: the Lord, with great respect and love, is also calling you to be a part of his people! [113]

Being Church means being God's people, in accordance with the great plan of his fatherly love ... It means proclaiming and bringing God's salvation into our world, which often goes astray and needs to be encouraged, given hope and strengthened on the way. The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel. [114]

Question: Who needs the Good News of God's mercy today?

To ponder: The Pharisees didn't think the man born blind was qualified to teach them, but that didn't stop him.

Pope Francis reflects:

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. *Mt* 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples". If we are not convinced, let us look at those first disciples, who, immediately after encountering the gaze of Jesus, went forth to proclaim him joyfully: "We have found the Messiah!" (*Jn* 1:41). ... So what are we waiting for? [120]

Question: Whose job is it to share the joy of the Gospel?

To ponder: There is more to sharing the Good News than preaching.

Pope Francis reflects:

Today, as the Church seeks to experience a profound missionary renewal, there is a kind of preaching which falls to each of us as a daily responsibility. It has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbours or complete strangers. This is the informal preaching which takes place in the middle of a conversation, something along the lines of what a missionary does when visiting a home. Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey. [127]

In this preaching, which is always respectful and gentle, the first step is personal dialogue, when the other person speaks and shares his or her joys, hopes and concerns for loved ones, or so many other heartfelt needs. Only afterwards is it possible to bring up God's word. [128]

Question: How are we sharing the Gospel already through our parish and in our daily lives?
