

LIVING FAITH

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

FEBRUARY 4, 2024



THE GOSPEL FOR TODAY

Mark 1:29-39

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.' And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.



REFLECTING ON THE GOSPEL

This Gospel passage is fascinating because it gives us some fascinating insights into the heart of Jesus. First, we are given an insight into the relationship of friendship between Jesus and his disciples. It is clear that Jesus knew his disciples well, and cared for them and their families. Simon, James and John seem to be very comfortable filling Jesus in on the state of health of Simon's mother-in-law, and inviting him in to be with her.

Next, the evangelist Mark gives us a glimpse into the compassion of Jesus. Seeing the sick woman, he seems not to hesitate, but goes straight to her, takes her by the hand and lifted her up. We can be certain that the lift is not only physical, but also spiritual and psychological! Then, Jesus heals the woman. Her fever having left her, she gets up and immediately she begins to serve her company!

There seems to be a link between healing and service here. Those of us who have been healed are healed not for our own sake, but for the sake of others. Jesus always calls us outward, to loving and compassionate service of others.



TALKING WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

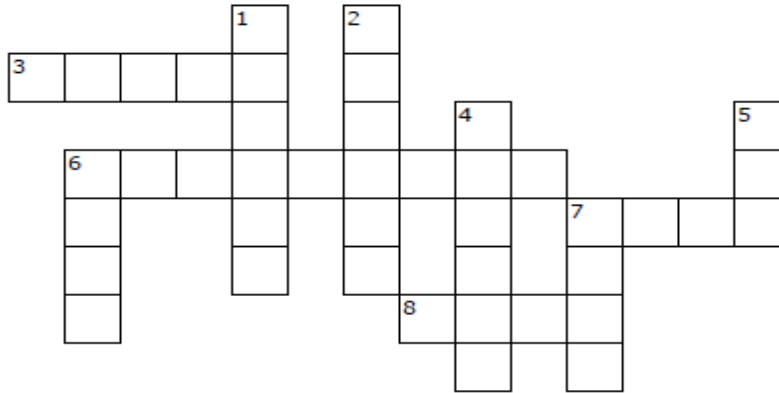
- When Jesus heals, the healing is not always physical; it can be the healing of a bad attitude, or of a negative way of thinking. Minds, bodies and spirits can need healing. In any case, when we are offered this new lease on life, we are called outward in compassionate service of our neighbour.
- How have you been healed?
- How have you reached out to others in compassion?
- Have you ever been part of the healing of another person? How?

Show Others You Care

The whole town gathered at the door to watch. So Jesus healed many people who were sick with various diseases.
Mark 1:33-34a (NIV)



The puzzle is based on Mark 1:29-39



ACROSS

3. A condition when the body temperature is higher than normal
6. A place of meeting for worship in the Jewish faith
7. The body part used for holding things
8. To cure from sickness or disease

DOWN

1. To deliver a sermon
2. Evil spirits
4. The time of day when the sun disappears below the horizon
5. A piece of furniture for sleeping
6. To be ill or have a disease
7. To give assistance; to aid

FEVER	HEAL	HAND	BED	SYNAGOGUE
SICK	HELP	PREACH	DEMONS	SUNSET

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THE CHURCH TEACHES THE SEASON OF LENT BEGINS ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

ASH WEDNESDAY BEGINS THE SEASON OF LENT

Many know of the tradition of abstaining from meat on Fridays during Lent, but we are also called to practice self-discipline and fast in other ways throughout the season. Contemplate the meaning and origins of the Lenten fasting tradition in this [reflection](#). In addition, the giving of alms is one way to share God's gifts—not only through the distribution of money, but through the sharing of our time and talents. As St. John Chrysostom reminds us: "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2446).

WHAT IS LENT?

Lent is a special time--a season-- of prayer, penance, sacrifice and almsgiving in preparation of the celebration of Easter. In the desire to renew the liturgical practices of the Church, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of Vatican Council II stated, "The two elements which are especially characteristic of Lent — the recalling of baptism or the preparation for it, and penance — should be given greater emphasis in the liturgy and in liturgical catechesis. It is by means of them that the Church prepares the faithful for the celebration of Easter, while they hear God's word more frequently and devote more time to prayer" (no. 109).



The word Lent itself is derived from the Anglo-Saxon words *lencten*, meaning "Spring," and *lenctentid*, or "Springtide."

40 DAYS OF LENT

By the end of the fourth century, the 40-day period of Easter preparation known as Lent existed, and that prayer and fasting constituted its primary spiritual exercises.

Of course, the number "40" has always had special spiritual significance regarding preparation. On Mount Sinai, preparing to receive the Ten Commandments, "Moses stayed there with the Lord for 40 days and 40 nights, without eating any food or drinking any water" (Ex 34:28). Elijah walked "40 days and 40 nights" to the mountain of the Lord, Mount Horeb (another name for Sinai) (1 Kgs 19:8). Most importantly, Jesus fasted and prayed for "40 days and 40 nights" in the desert before He began His public ministry (Mt 4:2).



THE SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

LOOKING AT THE SYNTHESIS REPORT- DELVING INTO PART I

PART I – THE FACE OF THE SYNODAL CHURCH

4. People in Poverty, Protagonists of the Church's Journey



Among the **many faces** of those in **poverty** are those who do not have what they need to lead a dignified life. There are also **migrants** and **refugees**; **indigenous peoples**, original and **Afro-descendent** peoples; those who suffer **violence** and **abuse**, in particular women; people struggling with addiction; **minorities** who are systematically denied a voice; abandoned **elderly** people; victims of **racism**, **exploitation**, and **trafficking**, especially minors; **exploited** workers; the economically **excluded**, and others living on the **peripheries**. The most vulnerable of the vulnerable, on whose behalf constant advocacy is needed, the **unborn and their mothers**.



Loving & Caring

Those **in poverty** ask the Church for **love**. By love, they mean **respect**, **acceptance** and **recognition**, without which providing food, money or social services represents forms of support that are certainly important, but which do not fully take account of the **dignity of the person**.



"New Poor"

The Assembly hears the cry of the **"new poor,"** produced by **wars** and **terrorism** that plague many countries on several continents, and the assembly condemns the **corrupt** political and economic **systems** that cause such strife.



Spiritual Poverty

Alongside forms of material poverty, many also experience **spiritual poverty**, understood as **lacking a sense of life's meaning**. [...] When the spiritually and materially poor encounter one another, they begin a journey towards finding answers to each other's needs. This is **a way of walking together** that makes the perspective of the **synodal Church concrete**, which will reveal to us the fullest sense of the Gospel beatitude, **"Blessed are the poor in spirit"** (Mt 5:3).



Care for Creation

Standing with those who are poor requires engaging with them in caring for our **common home**: the cry of the **earth** and the **cry** of those living in poverty are the same cry. The lack of responses to this cry makes the **ecological crisis**, and **climate change** in particular, a threat to the survival of humanity. The Apostolic Exhortation **Laudate Deum**, published by Pope Francis to coincide with the opening of the work of the Synodal Assembly, emphasises this.



Causes of Poverty

The Church's commitment must address the **causes of poverty** and exclusion. This includes actions to **protect the rights** of those who are excluded, and this may require **public denunciation** of **injustices**, whether perpetrated by societal structures or by individuals, corporations or governments.