



DARE TO DREAM

Lent Week 4 – Seeking the Light

Week Beginning 14th March

The Gospel offered for this week's reflection comes from Year A, so is different from the one we will hear in our parishes unless we have parishioners on the threshold of becoming full members of the Church. This gospel offers both the image of being at the gate – and the question are we going in or out? It is part of the journey to making a choice – of learning to see things differently. We do not do this alone, we are accompanied.

As a diocese we are on a threshold – as parishes and deaneries we need to make choices. Covid-19 has had an impact, but we do not necessarily know what that impact will be. Can we work together to share our resources, to manage our parishes better, to run our programmes, to reach out to others. Is anything blinding us from moving forward? These are just some of the questions we might need to reflect upon and eventually discover some answers. In his book, 'Let us Dream', Pope Francis speaks of three elements that can stop us from moving forward: **narcissism** – when news is only good when it suits our personal need or bad 'because you are its chief victim' (page 16), **discouragement** which leads us to complain about everything, so that we no longer see what is on offer to us, but focus on what we might be losing, again ultimately leading us to a place where we cannot see anything beyond ourselves, and finally **pessimism**, which Pope Francis defines as, 'a door you shut on the future and the new things it can hold; a door you refuse to open in case one day there'll be something new on your doorstep.'

These three ways can paralyse us and cause us to focus on what can stop us from moving forward.

Video: Dare to Dream – the call to cross a threshold
Watch and listen to Fr. Matt Anscombe

Prayerfully read this passage from the Gospel of John 9:1-41

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born

blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

- Take some to ponder on the words you have just read.
- Notice if there is anything, a word or phrase that stands out for you.
- Read the passage again and then reflect upon all or some of these questions: if you are doing this as a family or a group, make sure everyone is given the opportunity to speak.

Personal Questions

- Why was the blind man at the gate? And why was it a good spot for begging?
- How does the gospel speak to me of the journey from blindness to seeing - the journey from being outside the gate to entering a new way of life?
- How do I personally act as a gate to faith for others? Am I a closed gate or an open one?

Now thinking about your parish

- How does our church act as a gate? Is it a barrier – or a threshold for people to cross?
- How do we in our community help “outsiders” to see what being a person of faith can mean? How easy do we make it for them to enter the Lord’s gates with hope, joy and thanksgiving?
- Thinking about our own parishes – how could it be more welcoming to those who are seeking “new sight”? How do we help people to cross the threshold – physically and spiritually?

Action

- Look at the websites of the parishes in your deanery and read their newsletter.
- Identify what they do to reach out to people who may be seeking - e.g. do they run an Alpha course?
- Think about your own parish – what outreach is taking place?
- Identify three areas where people are living on the margins. Think about how the deanery could respond to their needs more effectively?

Finish with a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to give you the grace to be open to what it is the Lord may be calling you to in the months ahead.

