

Support Life Sunday 2022

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary time - 9th October 2022

You are not alone: Accompanying and caring for people living with mental illness

Readings:

2 Kings 5:14-17	Conversion of Naaman
Psalm 98:1, 2-3,3-4	The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power
2 Tm 2:8-13	If we have died with him, we shall also live with him...
Luke 17:11-19	The Ten Lepers

Homily Notes:

- The scriptures for this Sunday provide an ideal foundation to our national focus on accompanying and caring for people living with mental illness since leprosy was not considered simply to be a physical ailment but a symptom or sign of deeper psychological struggles. In many ways, the outcast lepers 2000 years ago are the sisters and brothers of those living with mental illness in 2022. If this is mentioned in a homily, it needs to be in the context of Jesus response to the leper – embracing as a sister, a brother, and even learning from the one who is struggling and marginalised.
- There are times when each of us struggle psychologically; when things are tough, when dealing with the death of one we love, when facing our own death, when the dreams we have for our relationships and our work, for our children and our security seem to unravel. It is appropriate and even necessary to acknowledge the struggle with mental health at these times since the struggle turns us to Jesus who is THE healer, the guide, and the one ready to accompany us through present difficulties to greater human maturity and therefore to greater maturity of faith.
- Seeking the counsel of a professional (as the lepers sought Jesus) is not a sign of weakness but a step in courage, confident that Jesus works through wise and skilled people and aware that we are wise when we ask for the help we need. Healthy psychology does not contradict healthy spirituality and healthy spirituality does not contradict health psychology.
- It may be helpful in a homily to quote from Pope Francis when he reflected on seeking psychoanalysis at a challenging time in his own life: "The treatment with the psychiatrist also helped me to locate myself and learn to manage my anxiety and avoid being rushed when making decisions. The decision making process is always complex. And the advice and observations that she gave me was very helpful. ... Her teachings are still very useful to me today."
- Pope Francis' homily on these scriptures in 2013 suggests that there are three steps in the journey of faith of the leper who returned to give thanks: 1. They cry out. 2. They walk, and 3. They give thanks. While the nine lepers took the first two steps, they were not as fully healed as the one who understood that this desire was not simply for the appearance of recovery (her skin was restored) but for relationship with Jesus the healer. The nine did not respond to Jesus' invitation to relationship. The one returned seeking relationship with Jesus and no doubt every time Jesus returned to the border region between Samaria and Galilee he and the cured person would have reunited as friends.

- You might like to listen to a half-hour podcast reflection on these scriptures at www.foodforfaith.org.nz – look for the Homily Studio link. The podcast for Support Life Sunday will be available to listen to from **Monday 3 October**.

Parish Newsletter gap-fillers for this Sunday.

- Pope Francis reflecting on seeking psychoanalysis for himself at a challenging time in his life: "The treatment with the psychiatrist also helped me to locate myself and learn to manage my anxiety and avoid being rushed when making decisions. The decision making process is always complex. And the advice and observations that she gave me was very helpful. ... Her teachings are still very useful to me today."
- "The difference between "active" and "busy" is that the former includes reflection and is directed, whereas the busy life feels out of control and does not seem purposeful or meaningful." Robert J. Wicks (who has visited NZ several times)
- "Let nothing perturb you, nothing frighten you. All things pass. God does not change. Patience achieves everything." Teresa of Avila
- "We are all born as originals, but many of us will die as photocopies." Carlo Acutis RIP 2006 aged 16
- "Whoever suffers from mental illness 'always' bears God's image and likeness in themselves, as does every human being. In addition, they 'always' have the inalienable right not only to be considered as an image of God and therefore as a person, but also to be treated as such". John Paul II 1996

Prayer of Intercession

(feel free to adapt these prayer-suggestions to the local parish / school need)

- Lord Jesus, You are our healer, and each one of us is in need of healing. Heal us from being caught up in ourselves. Free us from the fear that keeps us from reaching out to others who may need our gestures of friendship. Give us the courage and generosity to be gentle with our own struggles with mental health, and to then be gentle and generous with the struggles of others.
- In today's second reading we heard the saying that we can rely on: "If we have died with Christ, then we shall live with Him". Today especially we pray for those who may be physically healthy but who feel deeply burdened by their psychological struggles. Use each one of us, Lord Jesus, as your instruments to bring healing and new life to others.

Another Liturgy Suggestion for Support Life Sunday:

While it is easy to fill every moment of a parish or school liturgy with words, music or activity, the Rites of the Liturgy invite us to embrace silence at several points during the liturgy. Some people may not know how best to use this silence before Mass, after the homily or after communion. You might like to use this invitation perhaps especially with two minutes silence before Mass begins today:

Today, as we hear of Jesus' healing of the lepers let us take time to be still and silent, allowing Jesus to renew our desire for abundance in life for ourselves and for those we love. *(10 second silence)*. As we mark this Sunday as **Support Life Sunday**, let us call to mind our own struggles and anxieties, perhaps our awareness of our own vulnerable

mental health. *(10 second silence)*. We remember too those in our own families, friends, those we work with who struggle with issues of mental health *(10 second silence)*. Throughout this Mass we pray for all who face these difficulties, that Jesus will use us to bring them healing and abundance of life.