

Some questions to talk about

1. How did you feel when reflecting on Pope Francis' invitation to have a personal encounter with Jesus every day?
2. What opportunities are there already in your community for learning to pray and for growing in prayer? What else would you like to see offered in your parish?

Take a moment to pray

Be still and know that you are in the presence of God.

We ask God to bless the work of everyone who offers welcome and encouragement to those who come to our Churches: those who come for a funeral, a wedding or a baptism, families involved in preparing for a First Holy Communion or Confirmation of a child, people who come back to Church after a long time away.

We pray for everyone who is broken and hurting and needs the love and mercy of Jesus.

**Loving Lord Jesus,
may our hearts be open
to that moment of meeting with you.
May our encounters transform our lives
as they lead us more deeply
into the mystery of your presence.
May our struggle with life
and with faith be enriched
as we open ourselves to
your lifegiving Holy Spirit.
Amen.**



Leaflet One Meeting Jesus – the only one who can save me.

Proclaim'15

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Danny's Story

It was time to take the kids to Mass. To be honest it was a hassle on a Sunday morning. Sunday's the day for a lie-in isn't it? My wife isn't Catholic so it's up to me to make sure that the three children make their First Holy Communions. Father Mike stressed that we were expected to be there on Sundays.

I can't explain what happened next. It was just Mass wasn't it? The hymns were ones I had sung for years but it felt like the words were all new, like I was singing them for the first time. Something Father said about how blessed we are really hit home. He told us to look at the cross and to know how much God loves each one of us. I looked and something inside me just gave way.



"Are you OK Dad?" I heard my eldest say and felt a tug on my arm. He could see me wiping a couple of tears from my eyes. I put my arm round him and told him everything was great.

At the end of Mass I hung around while everyone shook Father's hand and made their way out of the church. I just had to tell someone. As I heard the words coming out of my mouth to Father Mike my eyes filled up again. "It's all true!" I said. "He really loves me. It's like someone switched the light on. It's all true."

From the outside it probably looks like my life is just the same. Family, work, football, all the usual stuff. But something big has happened inside me. He's alive. He loves me. Nothing will ever be the same again.

Scripture: Mark 2:1-12

A few days later Jesus went back to Capernaum, and the news spread that he was at home. So many people came together that there was no room left, not even out in front of the door. Jesus was preaching the message to them when four men arrived, carrying a paralyzed man to Jesus. Because of the crowd, however, they could not get the man to him. So they made a hole in the roof right above the place where Jesus was. When they had made an opening, they let the man down, lying on his mat. Seeing how much faith they had, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Some teachers of the Law who were sitting there thought to themselves, "How does he dare talk like this? This is blasphemy! God is the only one who can forgive sins!" At once Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he said to them, "Why do you think such things? Is it easier to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, pick up your mat, and walk'? I will prove to you, then, that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, pick up your mat, and go home!" While they all watched, the man got up, picked up his mat, and hurried away. They were all completely amazed and praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"



Reflection

There was a time when sickness was seen as your own fault. You must have deserved this. We are lucky to live in an age when we don't think like that anymore. But this man on the stretcher must often have wondered if God was punishing him. Deep inside perhaps he felt unloved, wrong, abandoned. Jesus looks into his eyes with love, compassion, mercy. "My son" he says "your sins are forgiven." Jesus knows where this man needs to be loved and healed. Jesus knows his deepest need.

Faith comes alive when we know that Jesus looks at us with this same love and compassion. In our place of deepest need, where we know we have failed, where we feel we cannot be loved, Jesus is right there. "My child" he says "Your sins are forgiven." In His death on the cross and in his resurrection Jesus has defeated all the sin and evil in the world. It is today that we like Danny can receive the forgiveness and love that only he can give us. This is the joy of the gospel – to discover the gentle and healing mercy of Jesus for me today.

Questions to ponder

What are the things in life you struggle with that might need the healing and forgiveness of Jesus today?

How might we in the coming week help to bring people to a place where they might meet Jesus for themselves?

From "The Joy of the Gospel" by Pope Francis

On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: "Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you". (164)

I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unflinchingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord". (3)



For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others? (8)