

1. Read — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence.
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**How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

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# Quick Connect

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## **Gospel Reading – Mark 9:30-37 – Roman Missal**

Jesus and his disciples left from there and began a journey through Galilee, but he did not wish anyone to know about it. He was teaching his disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise." But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to question him. They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, he began to ask them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they remained silent. They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest. Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all." Taking a child, he placed it in the their midst, and putting his arms around it, he said to them, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me."

## **Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings – 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday of OT**

*From a sermon On Pastors by Saint Augustine, bishop*

You have failed to strengthen the weak, says the Lord. He is speaking to wicked shepherds, false shepherds, shepherds who seek their own concerns and not those of Christ. They enjoy the bounty of mild and wool, but they take no care at all of the sheep, and they make no effort to heal those who are ill. I think there is a difference between one who is weak (that is, not strong) and one who is ill, although we often say that the weak are also suffering from illness. My brothers, when I try to make that distinction, perhaps I could do it better and with greater precision, or perhaps someone with more experience and insight could do so. But when it comes to the words of Scripture, I say what I think so that in the meantime you will not be deprived of all profit. In the case of the weak sheep, it is to be feared that the temptation, when it comes, may break him. The sick person, however, is already ill by reason of some illicit desire or other, and this is keeping him from entering God's path and submitting to Christ's yoke. There are men who want to live a good life and have already decided to do so, but are not capable of bearing suffering even though they are ready to do good. Now it is a part of the Christians strength not only to do good works but also to endure the sufferings that threaten. Lovers of the world, however, who are kept from works by some evil desire, lie sick and listless, and it is this sickness that deprives them of any strength to accomplish good works.

### **Truth and Holiness – Lesson and Discussion**

*“But they remained silent”*

“Let us see whether his words be true; let us find out what will happen to him. For if the just one be the son of God, he will defend him and deliver him from the hand of his foes. With revilement and torture let us put him to the test that we may have proof of his gentleness and try his patience. Let us condemn him to a shameful death; for according to his own words, God will take care of him.” It would seem that the Pharisees would speak the words above or the enemies of Christ, like the unrepentant thief who mocking Jesus saying, “He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” These words however, were written 100 years before the birth of Christ and are a prophecy of our Suffering Savior as well as every Christian.

**Why is it that people want to mock, torture, and test Jesus?** “The conduct of the just man serves as a constant reproach to the wicked who react by plotting against him, to belittle him, and to get rid of him. This has always been the case, from the earliest times to the present; and it was supremely so with our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**Have we ever been persecuted? How do we receive persecution for being good or holy? Why are we made fun of or even treated wrongly when we strive for holiness and doing good?** It is not that people dislike goodness or holiness, what people dislike is change. When we are good or holy it raises the bar or creates a standard. It reveals to others they could do better, they could be holier. When we are confronted with the truth it means we have to change our life. If we do not want to change our life, then we must get rid of that which convicts us, namely the truth. We have to remember we are either growing closer with God or we are falling away from Him. There is no middle ground where we can stay still. Jesus says that He spits out those who are lukewarm<sup>[4]</sup> (i.e. those who just stay stationary). Sloth is “a culpable lack of physical or spiritual effort; acedia or laziness.” Change means a movement, and effort toward the good. The beatitude, “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness”, is the opposite of sloth.

**How do we try to get rid of the truth?** One way is through relativism. People say there is no absolute truth; truth is relative to each person or situation. This means that goodness or holiness depends on each person. In other words there is no standard for holiness. Jesus however says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” The truth is not relative to each person, the truth is a person, the person of Jesus Christ. To get rid of truth implies that we have to get rid of the person of Jesus. Jesus sets the standard of holiness and gives us the challenge, “Be holy, as your heavenly Father is holy.” This call to holiness is only possible because of the example and grace of Jesus Christ. Hope lies in embracing this call to holiness. Despair happens when we avoid holiness or believe the lie that holiness is not possible. “The forms and tasks of life are many, but holiness is one - that sanctity which is cultivated by all who act under God's Spirit and, obeying the Father's voice and adoring God the Father in spirit and in truth, follow Christ, poor, humble and cross -

bearing, that they may deserve to be partakers of his glory. Each one, however, according to his own gifts and duties must steadfastly advance along the way of a living faith, which arouses hope and works through love.”

**What keeps us from holiness?** One thing that keeps us from holiness is the idea that we are already holy, that we are “ok” where we are in life. This is the sin of presumption. The disciples “had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest.” In the Spiritual Reading in this packet Saint Augustine points out three groups. All three believe they are “ok”, they believe they are great, but in fact they are lacking.

#### **Group One – The Leader**

These are the leaders, the shepherds, that instead of living their call to holiness, “they enjoy the bounty of mild and wool, but they take no care at all of the sheep, and they make no effort to heal those who are ill. This group perceive themselves to be holy and thus neglect their duties toward others, especially those in their care. The attitude is that I am fine, why do I have to worry about others.

#### **Group Two – The Unmotivated**

“In the case of the weak sheep, it is to be feared that the temptation, when it comes, may break him. The sick person, however, is already ill by reason of some illicit desire or other, and this is keeping him from entering God's path and submitting to Christ's yoke.” This group stays in its weakness never moving past it. When temptation comes they crumble. Their desire of God is not great enough, so they do not enter God's path or submit to Christ's yoke. This group is weak and lazy and thus stays in their sickness; they lack the hope necessary to believe that they can be well, that they can be holy. This group Saint John Vianney described well when he said they believe they are too sick to see a doctor or in other words to go to Church. This group falls into the falsehood that it is easier to remain sick, than to work toward healing or it is easier to remain overweight than to get fit and eat right. Short term to remain sick or overweight is easier, but in the long run both are not easy.

#### **Group Three – The Motivated**

“There are men who want to live a good life and have already decided to do so, but are not capable of bearing suffering even though they are ready to do good. Now it is a part of the Christians strength not only to do good works but also to endure the sufferings that threaten.” This group wants or desires the good and have decided to live it. They have the strength to do the good, but they do not have the strength to avoid evil. Saint Peter teaches what true life consists of. “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep the tongue from evil and the lips from speaking deceit, must turn from evil and do good, seek peace and follow after it.”

**What is common about all three groups?** The common element in all three groups is that they do not push themselves out of their comfort zone.