

**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 2:1-12 –Roman Missal**

When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at home. Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them. They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?" Jesus immediately knew in his mind what they were thinking to themselves, so he said, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth" -he said to the paralytic, "I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home." He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone. They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

## **Spiritual Reading**

*From the chapters On Charity by Saint Maximus the Confessor, abbot*  
Charity is a right attitude of mind which prefers nothing to the knowledge of God. If a man possesses any strong attachment to the things of this earth, he cannot possess true charity. For anyone who really loves God prefers to know and experience God rather than his creatures. The whole set and longing of his mind is ever directed toward him. For God is far superior to all his creation, since everything which exists has been made by God and for him. And so, in deserting God, who is beyond compare, for the inferior works of creation, a man shows that he values God, the author of creation, less than creation itself.

The Lord himself reminds us: Whoever loves me will keep my commandments. And this is my commandment: that you love one another. So the man who does not love his neighbor does not obey God's command. But one who does not obey his command cannot love God. A man is blessed if he can love all men equally. Moreover, if he truly loves God, he must love his neighbor absolutely. Such a man cannot hoard his wealth. Rather, like God himself, he generously gives from his own resources to

each man according to his needs.

Since he imitates God's generosity, the only distinction he draws is the person's need. He does not distinguish between a good man and a bad one, a just man and one who is unjust. Yet his own goodness of will makes him prefer the man who strives after virtue to the one who is depraved.

A charitable mind is not displayed simply in giving money; it is manifested still more by personal service as well as by the communication of God's word to others. In fact, if a man's service toward his brothers is genuine and if he really renounces worldly concerns, he is freed from selfish desires. For he now shares in God's own knowledge and love. Since he does possess God's love, he does not experience weariness as he follows the Lord his God. Rather, following the prophet Jeremiah, he withstands every type of reproach and hardship without even harboring a evil thought toward any man.

For Jeremiah warns us: Do not say: "We are the Lord's temple." Neither should you say: "Faith alone in our Lord Jesus Christ can save me." By itself faith accomplishes nothing. For even the devils believe and shudder. No, faith must be joined to an active love of God which is expressed in good works. The charitable man is distinguished by sincere and long-suffering service to his fellow man: it also mean using things aright.

### The Four Friends - Lesson and Discussion

*"They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men."*

Many of us, when reading this Sunday's Gospel reading, look at different points and people of the story: Jesus, the paralytic, a crowded house, and the Pharisees, who were also present. However, the friends of the paralytic, who came to help carry the paralytic to Jesus, are often overlooked. We see that the four friends go out of their way, "opening up the roof", to bring their friend to Jesus. Like the leper in last Sunday's Gospel, nothing is going to stop these friends from getting to Jesus.

**Who were these four friends?** We do not know a lot about these four friends, but what we do know of them is that they were close enough friends to rush him to see Jesus, carry him up on a roof, make an opening and then to lower him down to Jesus. Now that's friendship!

**What do the four friends see when they bring the paralytic to Jesus?** They witness two miracles: First, mercy, the Lord's forgiveness of their friend's sin, "The men carrying the paralytic understand that Jesus has given their incapacitated friend the greatest good – freedom from his own sin." [1] Second, they see the healing of his body. If we can be like the four friends and bring others to Christ, we could see the conversion and grace come upon them, and rejoice with them.

**How are we like the four friends?** Like the friends, we must bring others to Jesus Christ. "On many occasions the greatest favor, the greatest good we can do for a friend, brother, our parents and children is to help them see the beauty of divine mercy in the sacrament of penance. It is a good for the family, for the Church, for the whole of humanity, even though here on earth very few know about it." [2]

**How are we to help bring others to Christ?** "The paralytic was healed body and soul. And his friends are an example for us today of how we should help others – mostly through our friendships, cooperating in apostolic initiatives, and fostering the good of society with all the means at our disposal, working for the common good, for a decent life and culture, and offering positive solutions, when faced with evil. We should do this in our own professional circumstances as well as in any other environment in which we happen to be involved (neighborhoods, parents' associations, parishes...); it is here that we can cooperate in the building up of good and avoid cooperation in anything that is evil." [3] **List some tangible things you can do to help the people around you come closer to Christ.**

"Cooperating in good implies, of course, avoiding any cooperation with evil, not only in important decisions but also in the small ways...not wasting money – even only small amounts – on magazines, newspapers, books, shows and entertainment, which because of their sectarian, anti-Christian or immoral character, damage the soul; buying one's newspaper at a particular newsstand (even if it means a longer walk) rather than from one where publications are sold attacking the Church or Christian morals; avoiding a pharmacy selling contraceptives; or not buying a certain product (possibly very good) which is advertised on an immoral or anti-Catholic program on radio or television. And our action will be even more effective if we suggest a similar line of conduct to our friends. If lukewarm Christians were to stop buying certain magazines and publications, many of these would not survive. It is regrettable that, on many occasions, *much of the immense damage caused is being subsidized by Christians who, besides, are always complaining about society's moral ruin.*" [4]

**Why should I bring others to Christ?** In today's culture, we have become more and more isolated. When we see a homeless person on the side of the road, instead of offering food or water, we may think, "Get a job!" Other times we can think someone should have worked harder or the person is lazy. This is not our job or responsibility to decide these things. However, it is our responsibility to stop evil and bring good to all we meet whoever they are wherever they are. "What the soul is in the body, Christians are in the world." [5]

[1] In Conversation with God 3, 53.1

[2] In Conversation with God 3, 53.1

[3] In Conversation with God 3, 53.1

[4] In Conversation with God 3, 53.1 (Italic's added)

[5] Letter to Diognetus, 5