

## RCIA Class October 12 2009      Christian Scriptures

### Deacon

Meditation: Be Still and Know that I am God.

Gospel Reading for next week:

The Christian Scriptures or what we call the New Testament is actually the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures or what we call the Old Testament.

The Christian Scriptures teaches us about the life of Jesus and the teachings of Jesus and how to live as Christians.

There are 27 books in the New Testament and they are divided into four sections:

1. The Gospels----The Gospels testify to God's saving power through his Son, Jesus Christ the Messiah.
2. The Acts of the Apostles-----The Acts of the Apostles describes the Spirit led growth of the early church.
3. The Letters and Epistles----These Letters and Epistles tell us about the life of the early church and give instructions on how to live as Christians. Thirteen of the twenty-one letters were either written by or attributed to St. Paul.
4. The Book of Revelations----The Book of Revelations was written by a Disciple of John to address the hopelessness the people felt when Jesus failed to return and the world did not end.

The Christian Scriptures were passed on orally until about 50 AD. and then they were written primarily for three reasons:

1. The end of the world was not coming as quickly as the early Christians first thought.
2. The oral traditions were being distorted.

Have you ever told a story to someone who repeated it to another, who repeated it to another and so on and when you heard the story, it was not at all like you first told it?

Well, this was what was happening to the early Christian communities.

3. The people needed more instruction.

When we go to Mass, we hear three readings and a Psalm out of the Bible.

The First reading is always out of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The Psalm is out of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The second reading is usually from a Letter or an Epistle out of the Christian Scriptures.

The Gospel reading is out of one of the Gospels which is out of the Christian Scriptures.

Most of the time, we can relate the First Reading with the Gospel reading.

They usually have the same theme and the same message.

The Psalm usually gives us the theme of the message.

We then hear a homily in which the Homilist ties the readings with the way we should live as Christians.

Most of the time, he preaches on the Gospel.

This is how Jesus taught----He told stories, performed miracles, and used parables to teach his message.

Can anyone tell me what a parable is?

It is a vivid short story told to convey a religious truth.

The friends of Jesus once asked him: Who are the really happy people?

What would you have said?

Those who have lots of money and plenty to eat?

Those who are important and can boss others around?

Those who are strong and never get hurt?

Jesus surprised everyone by saying the opposite.

The really happy people are:

The poor.

The unimportant.

The hungry.

The heartbroken.

The peaceful.

The persecuted.

Who do you think the poor are?

They are the ones who are eager to learn more about God because possessions do not get in their way because they have none.

Why do you think Jesus talked about the unimportant people?

Because they are most important people to God and that is all that really matters. God is the only one we have to be important to.

Why the hungry?

Because they are the ones who will really appreciate the food they receive and are more likely to share with others. And this is what God wants of his people.

Why the heartbroken?

Because if your heart was ever broken, you came out of that experience much stronger and more likely to treat others without being a mean or non-caring person.

Why the peaceful?

Because the peaceful of heart are much more capable of being peacemakers than someone who is restless of heart.

Why the persecuted?

Because they stand up for all that is right and understand the wrongs of this world and as a result are better equipped to improve the world.

You see these are all values that probably don't go along with the way the world sees things---They are the ways that God sees things and he wants each of us to live our lives according to his values.

These values are called the Beatitudes which are found in the Christian Scriptures in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 5:3-12).

They tell us how to live as Christians just like the Ten Commandments do.

So you could say: the Old Testament gives us the Ten Commandments and the New Testament gives us the Beatitudes.

These are all guidelines on how we should live our lives.

**Deacon**

Beatitudes handout lets pray them together

***Beatitudes - Matthew 5:3-12***

Meditation: Divide into two groups—side one read the Beatitude, side 2 read the “lucky” statement. The leader will pray the prayer.

***1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

How lucky you are if you are poor!!

God will make you rich!!

**Forgive us, Lord,  
for surrounding ourselves  
with so many things  
that we can no longer see you.  
For everything we have is  
your gift to us, and those  
whose hands are empty  
know that best.**

***2. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.***

How lucky you are if your heart has been broken!!

It will mend even stronger!!

**Forgive us, Lord,  
for being so quick to complain  
about our own troubles,  
and slow to see the  
troubles other people have.  
Help us use our troubles to grow strong,  
so that we can help others.**

***3. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.***

How lucky you are if you're not very important!!

God will make you great!!

**Forgive us, Lord,  
for wanting to be more important than others,  
when even the unimportant  
are important to you,**

and that's all that matters.  
Help us to see other people the way you see them.

***4. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they shall be satisfied.***

How lucky you are if you're starving!!  
You'll get all you want and more!!

Thank you, Lord, for providing us with so many good things,  
that we never really go hungry,  
and hardly know what it means to be starving.  
Open our eyes to the needs of those who haven't got  
what we've got,  
because you have called them the lucky ones.  
And give food to the hungry.

***5. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.***

How lucky you are if you are tender with others!!  
You know how tender God really is!!

Forgive us, Lord,  
for being hard and unforgiving with others,  
and even with ourselves.  
It shows how little we know you as you really are.  
Tell us again and again  
the good news that you forgive us,  
so that we can grow into  
forgiving people.

***6. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.***

How lucky you are if you're straight with people!!  
You see God very clearly indeed!!

Forgive us, Lord,  
for so often being crooked  
instead of straight,  
unfair instead of fair,  
cheating instead of honest,  
pretending instead of open.

**How can we complain that we  
can't see you,  
when we're the very opposite  
of you!**

***7. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called  
children of God.***

**How lucky you are if you make friends with people!!  
You've brought a bit of heaven to earth!!**

**Forgive us, Lord,  
for often making more enemies than friends.  
That way will never turn the world into a paradise,  
only a hell.**

**Teach us your way of  
spreading friendship to everyone,  
and treating them  
as we'd like them  
to treat us.**

***8. Blessed are the persecuted for the sake of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

**How lucky you are if people hate you for standing up for  
what is right!!**

**A new world can be built on people like you!!**

**Forgive us, Lord,  
for being such cowards  
in standing up for what is right.  
It's much easier to say what other people say,  
and do what they do.  
Give us the courage to do what we know is right,  
whatever other people say,  
because that's the only way a new world  
can be built. Amen.**

## Teachers Aide

### Signs and Symbols of our church

Today we talk about signs and symbols in our lives, whether it is in our family life, or Church life, our school life, in our community life. Everywhere we have symbols. Mankind has used all of our senses, sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, to connect us to our relationships, with each other, with God and with Church.

Symbols and signs or actions point us to something that is much deeper than the initial visual or symbolic action.

This brings us to the signs and symbols of the Mass

What do we do when we enter the Church,

**Sign of Cross** with water. **Baptism**

**Genuflect** before entering the pew, reverence the altar in which Jesus lives in the form of the host.

Have a **host**, show the host, what does it symbolize. Our faith teaches that the Eucharist when it is changed at Mass changes into the body and blood of Christ.

The **red light or sanctuary light** signifies that Jesus is present in the Church.

When we **stand** in Church it is to reverence and respect our faith beliefs.

We **kneel** in reverence and respect.

**Procession** of the cross and the book also are symbols of the reverence we have for our God.

Liturgy of the Mass and the sacraments is how we worship and pray together to praise God. Liturgy is from the Greek word meaning “a public work that benefits the whole community.” We come together to worship, praise the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We have different rites in the Catholic Church but basically the liturgy is the same all over the world. Different sacred celebrations give expression to our faith in God.

Look at the world around you, all of the signs and symbols of God’s love and care. He cares for each of us. He does not mind who we are? Where we came from or what we have? He loves us!! Just the way we are. How can we return this unconditional love?

### Parables

In Jesus’ time the parables covered common ground the people knew about like sheep, shepherds, lost coins, vineyards, unjust judges, and wayward children. Parables were easy for his listeners to relate to because they dealt with practical everyday life.

The parables were all about justice and mercy and were intertwined with Jesus’ revelation of His Father’s kingdom. The parables are prophetic and demanding our attention. They call us to

conversion and humility because we humbly accept our dependence on God. They acknowledge that we are given much and are expected to give back much. Parables draw us in softly and then hit us with the sledge hammer of reality.

Read the parable, the Widow and the Unjust Judge (Luke 18: 1-6). This is the shortest parable of all of the parables.

Let us look at another parable about the great feast. (Luke 14: 15-24). Who were the people invited and why did they not want to come? Compare them to our own lives and how do we answer God's call.

Closing Prayer.