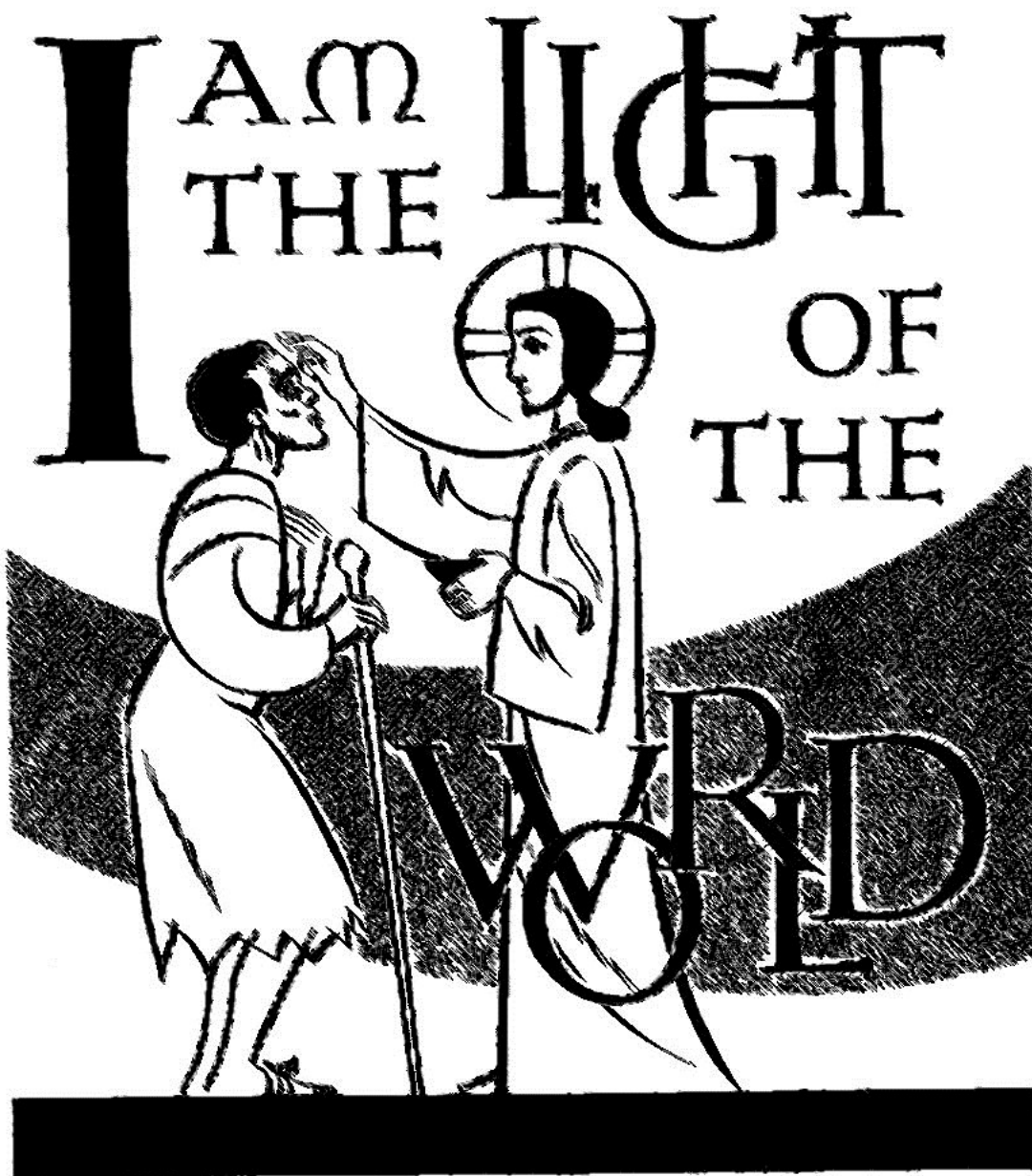


DISCERNMENT RETREAT

SCRUTINY II

JOHN 9: 1-41

THE MAN BORN BLIND



Theme: *Light illuminates the darkness*

Scrutiny 2: John's Gospel 9:1-41 *The Man Born Blind.*

About this resource:

This Parish resource offers a framework for RCIA groups to provide a simple discernment retreat during the Lenten Season.

Parishes may prefer to book a retreat centre or even a neighbouring parish hall to differentiate between the weekly RCIA meeting and this retreat.

It is also preferable to choose an environment with a garden setting for participants to sit quietly amidst God's creation. This provides sacred space and time for the discernment of their RCIA conversion journey.

The time frame is at the discretion of the retreat leader and can be adjusted accordingly.

Each booklet is for the personal diarising of the participants. Therefore sharing of thoughts should be left open and at the discretion of the participants.

Focus Group:

The Discernment Retreat is intended for the Parish RCIA Team, the elect, and sponsors.

Purpose of Discernment Retreat:

The purpose of the discernment retreat is to provide opportunity for each person to spend time reflecting on their own journey of faith, guided by the Gospel of the particular Scrutiny from Year A in the liturgical cycle.

Music: *suggestions only-you may prefer your own selection of hymns*

It is recommended gentle background music be played during times of reflection to support the participants discernment and contemplation over the questions posed.

Below is listed a few suggested hymns in keeping with the Gospel theme from commonly used Parish resources:

Gather Australia: No. 106 *A Lamp For Our Feet*
No. 404 *Christ, Be Our Light*
No. 405 *The Light of Christ*
No. 406 *Light of Christ/Exsultet*

As One Voice: No. 29 *Amazing Grace*
No. 53 *Receive The Light* (Chant)
No. 79 *Do Not Be Afraid*
No. 134 *Out of Darkness*

Theme: *Light illuminates the darkness*

Scrutiny 2:
Blind.

John's Gospel 9:1-41 *The Man Born*

Prayer suggestions:

- Opportunity for the Parish Priest or Deacon to offer anointing of catechumens (only) with the Oil of Catechumens. Refer RCIA Text #190-194
- Opportunity for the Parish Priest or Deacon to offer The Ephphetha Rite: *'that is, be opened'*
- Refer RCIA Text #184-186
- The Gospel read in the style of Lectio Divina (refer attached)
- Taize prayer experience
- General intercessions offered spontaneously
- Hymn reflections
- Small group—communal prayer sharing
- The day presented for private prayer reflection and/or journalling
- Provide moments of sacred silence
- Formal Prayer
- Presentation of The Lord's Prayer Refer RCIA Text #136,165-167
- Presentation of The Creed Refer RCIA Text #180-183
(scrolls of The Lord's Prayer and The Creed may be downloaded from the Centre for Liturgy web site:)

Please note Exorcisms may only be performed by the Parish Priest or an experienced Deacon.



Leaders Notes:

Within this retreat pack are various choices/ suggestions for prayer, music, and other helpful hints.

It is at your own discretion how the retreat unfolds and the time you allocate for the whole retreat.

A basic explanation of *Lectio Divina* has also been provided p. 5-6

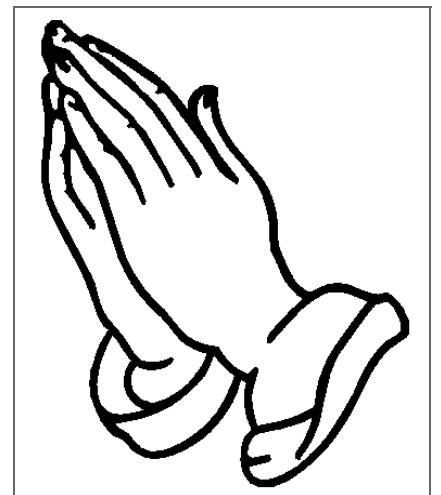
It is preferable for sponsors to attend and support 'the elect' for the retreat.

Read through the pack 1st.

Format:

1. Prepare a prayer focus: provide a minimum of the Bible opened at the Gospel text; candle; the liturgical colour purple. Other suggestions may be to offer a shallow container of mud; an icon or picture of the Gospel
2. Offer welcome and share the theme of the retreat. You may wish to introduce the Gospel by reading the Prologue.
3. Begin with the Opening Prayer. You may prefer to choose your own prayer.
4. Select a person to read the Gospel in its entirety the 1st time.
5. Have someone (may be the same person) read the Gospel sections in the 2nd reading of the Gospel. The leader reads the leader's parts indicated in blue.
6. The pack poses questions in purple to assist the participants to reflect and discern their conversion journey. The leader may also wish to read aloud the purple sections. Break up the 2nd reading of the Gospel by allowing time for reflection after each purple section.
7. Allow time for stillness and personal reflection with quiet background music to instil the ambience of the retreat.
8. Allow sufficient time for discernment of the overall conversion journey using the tree-diagram page 17
9. Conclude with Final Prayer. You may prefer to choose your own prayer.

Please note Exorcisms may only be performed by the Parish Priest or an experienced Deacon.



Lectio Divina

Opening Prayer:

“Lord Jesus, you who are the Son of the Living God,
Teach me to listen to what you tell me in the holy
Scriptures, and to discover your face there.”

[Guigo II]

Guigo II

- Guigo was a 12th century Carthusian monk who developed the four steps of prayer developing our spirituality on praying the Scripture, called *Lectio Divina*.
- These four steps being:
 - i. *Lectio* - reading
 - ii. *Meditatio* - meditating
 - iii. *Oratio* - praying
 - iv. *Contemplatio* - contemplating



Living in Christ

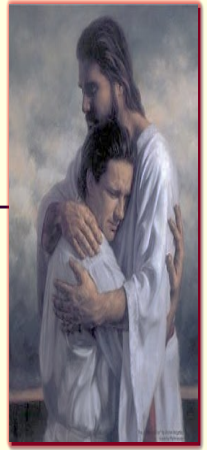
- What key words; phrases; images touched your heart?
- Allow them to ignite and act in you today.
- Encourage the moment of Lectio Divina to be revisited in your heart today...

Reading...context

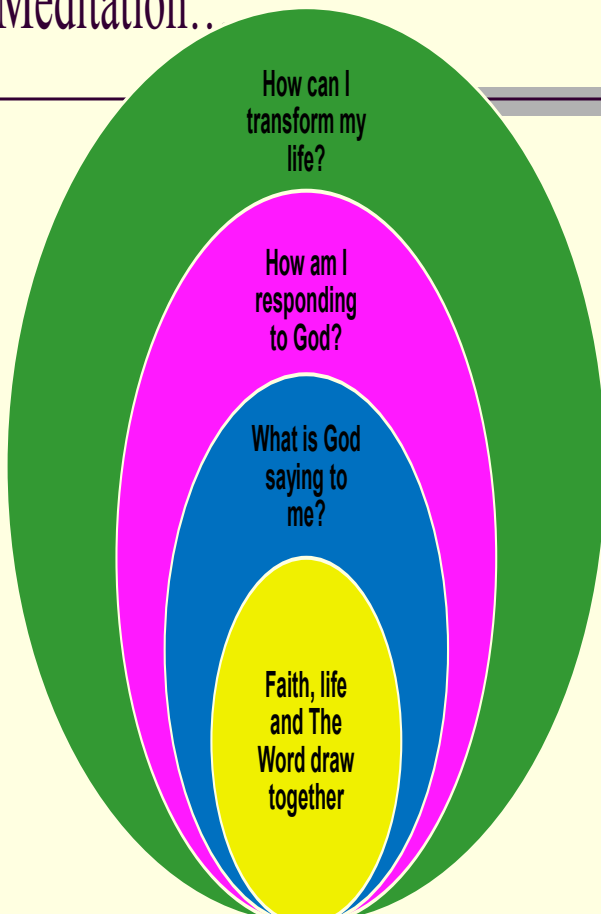
- Who – key characters
- Where – place setting
- When - history
- What – key words; phrases; images
- Why – speak to the heart; how does this relate to me.

Prayer...

- Allow the reading of Scripture to emerge within us.
- Prayer is our response to God.
- How do we feel?
- Do we need to go back and read the passage again?
- What key words; phrases; images stand out and ignite or challenge our heart?

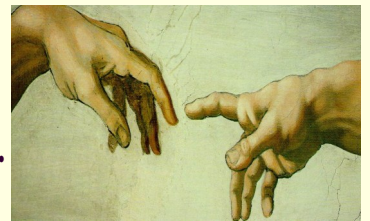


Meditation..



Contemplation..

- God responding to us.
- Be open and without expectation.
- We do not control the events...rest in God.
- Allow an exchange to happen naturally...trust in God.



Background:

In the early first century, the Jewish diaspora had reduced them to a desolate and downcast community, hanging on by threads to the fabric of their cultural past. The collapse of the Jewish State left a gaping wound, which the Jewish community naturally was sensitive to protect.

The Gospel of John is broken into 3 sections being: [1:1-18] The Prologue; [1:19-12:50] The Book of Signs; [13:1-20:31] The Book of Glory.

Scrutiny 2 (Jn 9:1-41), within Year A of the Liturgical cycle, is found within the section known as the *Book of Signs*; The focus being light illuminating the darkness in our lives and faith practice.

Conflict between Jesus and the Jews is highlighted through the clearly defined sign of healing the man, blind from birth, on the Sabbath.

The tone of John's Gospel, written [100—120A.D.] projects the deep division and resentment between the Jews and John's community. The Temple had been destroyed in 70A.D. and the early Christian community was expelled from the synagogue and Jewish society.

The Jews experience of the great wealth and might of The Temple reduced to ruins, was a living reminder of their depressed circumstance. The Temple had been the tabernacle of the '*Holy of Holies*'; the most holy place where God resided. Remember John's Gospel was written in the wake of the Temple's ruin, therefore, this icon of Jewish national identity, as the chosen ones of God, is a living memory, reminding the Jewish people of their greatness lost; while simultaneously fuelling the desire for restoration.

Prologue:

John's Gospel challenges our preconceived understanding of suffering and disability.

Jesus appreciates that the blind man's disability is an opportunity for us all to respond with the *caritas* of God's love in our relationship with others. The blind man's disability is a tool in God's divine plan to reveal His grace in our lives; a lesson we can either learn or ignore.

God's grace should shine through us. People with any disability or need offer us an opportunity to exercise the divine virtues we already possess, being '*made in the image and likeness of God.*'

Remember that the blind man does not initiate the encounter with Jesus and his disciples.

The blind man is simply a prop, an innocent example used by the disciples to ask their question, and the story unfolds with amazing twists and turns...



Opening Prayer: (together let us pray)

Lord Jesus,

You give light to everyone who comes in to the world; though unseen, You reveal Yourself through the works of your hand so that all people may learn to give thanks to You, our Creator.

We have all grown through following the light of Christ and the way of the Gospel, which lies open for us.

We ask You Jesus, to set our feet firmly on the path and acknowledge You the living God, who truly speaks to each of us.

Guide our path forward, that we may walk in Your light and learn to trust in Your wisdom.

May we commit our lives, this day to Your care, so that we may come to commit to You with all our heart.

May the light of Christ illuminate the darkness in our lives.

Amen

[Adapted from Option A #52 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults]

Retreat Leader prays...

Dear Father,

Through Your holy prophets You proclaimed to all who draw near You, 'Wash and be cleansed.' and through Christ You have granted us rebirth in the Spirit.

Bless Your servants as they earnestly prepare for the Sacraments of Initiation.

Fulfil Your promise: sanctify 'the elect' who are with us today, in preparation for Your gifts, that they may come into the community of Your Church.

We ask this through Christ our Lord

Amen.

[Adapted from Option B #97 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults]

The Gospel of John [9:1-41]

As He walked along, He saw a man blind from birth. [2] His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" [3] Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. [4] We must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. [5] As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." [6] When He had said this, He spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, [7] saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. [8] The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" [9] Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." [10] But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" [11] He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." [12] They said to him, "Where is he?" He said,

"I do not know."

[13] They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. [14] Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. [15] Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." [16] Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for He does not observe the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. [17] So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about Him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet." [18] The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight [19] and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" [20] His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; [21] but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself."

[22] His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. [23] Therefore his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'

[24] So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man (Jesus) is a sinner." [25] He answered, "I do not know whether He is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." [26] They said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" [27] He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" [28] Then they reviled him, saying, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. [29] We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He comes from." [30] The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where He comes from, and yet He opened my eyes. [31] We know that God does not listen to sinners, but He does listen to one who worships Him and obeys His will. [32] Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. [33] If this man were not from God, He could do nothing." [34] They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

[35] Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when He found him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" [36] He answered, "And who is He, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in Him." [37] Jesus said to him, "You have seen Him, and the one speaking with you is He." [38] He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him. [39] Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." [40] Some of the Pharisees near Him heard this and said to Him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" [41] Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

[1]As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. [2] His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" [3] Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him.

Within these verses, Jesus' authority instructs with the understanding that He and God are co-equal.

'Come to me , all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you.'

[Mtt 11 ;29]

- ◆ *Reflect on your personal struggles and hardships. In carrying these burdens, have you ever blamed God?*
- ◆ *Through your own struggle have you learnt anything.*
- ◆ *Has inner strength, forbearance, or patience developed in you, offering comfort and strength?*

'To pray , therefore, is to connect whatever human struggle or pain we encounter.... With the gentle and humble heart of Jesus...'

[4] We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. [5] As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." [6] When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva

and spread the mud on the man's eyes, [7] saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

The language is graphic and visual. Saliva has healing properties. For example don't we still automatically suck our finger if it is hurt?

Sacred Sabbath - Jesus' action was considered work, in making the paste to cure the blind man. This was considered to have broken the 3rd Commandment: *'Keep the Sabbath day holy'*, since the man's blindness was not a fatal rescue.

- ◆ *Why did Jesus use His saliva to make the paste with the mud?*
- ◆ *Could He have used something else?*
- ◆ *Did He need to use anything at all?*
- ◆ *Why did Jesus intentionally perform this healing miracle on the Sabbath?*



[5] As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Jesus can cure the physical blindness of the man born blind, but what of the blind faith of the Pharisees? The blind man is open and willing to see the truth. The Pharisees stubbornly refuse.

- ◆ *In our lives are there moments where we refuse to believe?*
- ◆ *Does stubbornness, fear, or disbelief obstruct our vision?*
- ◆ *Within your RCIA conversion journey, have there been moments of struggle or obstacles in your faith formation?*

[8]The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not this the man who used to sit and beg?" [9] Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." [10] But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" [11] He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." [12] They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

The formerly blind man shares with his neighbours the circumstances of his miracle story.

- ◆ *Have you shared with family, friends and/or neighbours your RCIA journey?*
- ◆ *What response have you received?*
- ◆ *If you are comfortable you may like to share this with the group.*



[13] They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. [14] Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. [15] Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see."

In keeping with Jewish custom, cures always required witness and approval by the religious leaders of the community.

[16] Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for He does not observe the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. [17] So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about Him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

The immediate response of some Pharisees is to question the *day* the miracle occurred.

- ◆ Are there times in your life where you are blinded by detail and fail to see the truth?

The division among the Pharisees has them place the onus back on to the now sighted man. The formerly blind man, who up till now, was ostracised from the community, is being scrutinised.

- ◆ Are there times of division or struggle in your life; when you find it easier to be distracted, than face the truth of your circumstance?

[18] The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight [19] and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

Spend some time considering your own conversion journey.

- ◆ Did you encounter any issues of disbelief as you positively responded to Jesus' invitation to *come and see* what the Church offers?



[20] His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; [21] but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself."

Fear of standing alone is very real. The parents were in fear of being ostracised from the Jewish community that considered their sin the cause of their son's blindness.

Having Catholic values in today's world demands courage.

Australia's freedoms mean that as Catholics we are often challenged by secular values.

- ◆ Consider your own personal relationship with Christ. Your sponsor stands with you for support, along with the parish community. However, in your daily life, there may be times to stand alone.
- ◆ Spend a few moments in prayer asking the Holy Spirit for courage.
- ◆ Are there any moral challenges you face? Consider what would Jesus do?

[22] His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. [23] Therefore his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'

[24] So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man (Jesus) is a sinner." [25] He answered, "I do not know whether He is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

Many people going through the process of conversion receive obstruction from those they know. The formerly blind man could not explain his sight.

- ◆ Have you faced moments of grace in your life?
- ◆ Has Christ shone a light in your darkness?



[26] They said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" [27] He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" [28] Then they reviled him, saying, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. [29] We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He comes from." [30] The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where He comes from, and yet He opened my eyes.

Remember that this formerly blind man was innocently chosen as an example of God's work. Now *he* is Jesus' greatest defender.

- ◆ Consider your RCIA journey and why you are on this conversion of faith experience.
- ◆ Something inexplicable may have touched your heart. It is real to you: maybe a change within, a different outlook, a growth in your character.
- ◆ The proof of Christ's reality may simply be your witness to Him, as the sighted man did.
- ◆ Reflect on how you respond to others who might question your choices about becoming Catholic?

[31] We know that God does not listen to sinners, but He does listen to one who worships Him and obeys His will. [32] Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. [33] If this man were not from God, He could do nothing." [34] They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

The man now with sight, begins witnessing to Christ amidst the doubt that surrounds him.

- ◆ After you are received into the Church by the Sacraments of Initiation, consider how you will live out your discipleship in everyday life. How will you bear witness?



[35] Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when He found him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" [36] He answered, "And who is He, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in Him." [37] Jesus said to him, "You have seen Him, and the one speaking with you is He." [38] He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him. [39] Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." [40] Some of the Pharisees near Him heard this and said to Him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" [41] Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

The theme '*light illuminates the darkness*' involves openness to Christ.

- ◆ Spend time reflecting on your conversion journey.
- ◆ Have you had moments where Christ has illuminated any darkness or doubt in your life?
- ◆ Are there any areas of spiritual blindness you may still struggle with?
- ◆ Consider sharing these, (if any) with your sponsor; RCIA Coordinator; or Parish Priest.



Time for Discernment....Spend some time in quiet reflection discerning your conversion journey...



Our faith and relationship with Christ is a living reality.

With strong roots in faith, we are better able to weather the struggles in life.

With strong roots in faith the fruits of our character are better perfected to reflect our Christian faith and how we live our life.

Reflect on the growth of your relationship with Jesus, from when you 1st began your conversion journey and now

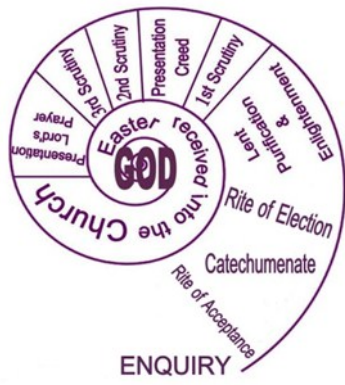
Has your familiarity with Christ's Gospel teaching deepened your understanding of Jesus and His call of discipleship....

How will you live out your Christian mission?

Through your RCIA journey has your time spent in prayer and worship strengthened your relationship with Jesus?

Do you feel a sense of belonging and acceptance within your parish community?

You may like to write your thoughts on the following page....



ENQUIRY

Final Prayer: (Retreat Leader)

Father of love and power,
It is Your will to establish everything in Christ and to draw us into His all-embracing love.

Guide 'the elect' of Your Church:
Strengthen them in their vocation,
Build them into the kingdom of Your Son,
And seal them with the Spirit of Your promise.
Amen

[Adapted from Option B #122 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults]

Prayers of the Faithful:

We pray that each of us here today will ponder The Word of God in our hearts and savor its meaning more fully day by day.

Let us pray to the Lord

All: Lord, hear our prayer

We pray that by accepting the Son of God as our teacher, we may become true worshippers of the Father in spirit and truth.

Let us pray to the Lord

All: Lord, hear our prayer

We pray that God may dispel any darkness and be the light that shines in the hearts of the elect.

Let us pray to the Lord

All: Lord, hear our prayer

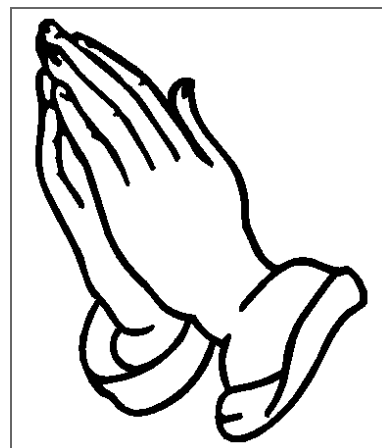
We pray that the elect may open their hearts to God and acknowledge Him as the source of light and the witness of truth.

Let us pray to the Lord

All: Lord, hear our prayer

[Adapted from #140 & #154 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults]

Together Pray: *The Lord's Prayer...*



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Lectio Divina

Bishop David Walker DD (ACBC)

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