



Journey to Joy! Healing for Life's Sorrows Part 1: "Let the Healing Begin!"

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Theme: God wants to bring us to a deeper level of wholeness and healing in Him.

Grace: I pray for the grace of expectant faith demonstrated by receptivity of heart, trust in God, and surrender to His holy will.

The Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Praying with Sacred Scripture

An ancient form of prayer is called *Lectio Divina* or Holy Reading. It is a way to pray with Sacred Scripture and find within it the graces God wants you to experience. Following the steps below, pray the daily passages. You might want to journal any thoughts, inspirations, emotions or memories you experience. They will be a record of your journey through your time of study.

How to PRAY Sacred Scripture

Compose yourself for your time of prayer, and then:

Pray Invoke the Holy Spirit and ask Him to illuminate your mind, open your heart, and help you be receptive to His movement within you. Remember, God is always with you. Place yourself in His presence.

Review and Read Review the theme and pray to receive the monthly grace. Grace is a gift given to us by God out of His abundant love. In fact, it is a share in the Divine Life itself. Daily prayer helps us be receptive to the grace God offers us, as do the sacraments and a virtuous life. Then, READ the Scripture passage slowly. Ponder it in your heart. Let the mystery awaken and unfold within you by noting any words, phrases, ideas that move you in some way.

For private prayer it may be helpful to “personalize” a passage by substituting a third person plural pronoun with your name or a first person singular pronoun (“us” to “me” or “ours” to mine,” or your own name, etc.). One spiritual writer tells us that God already had us in mind to read a passage when He inspired the evangelist of old. Scripture is our book of love from God, our own personal love letter from Him. It helps to read it from that perspective.

Praying with Sacred Scripture Continued

Ask Ask yourself three questions: What does this Scripture passage communicate? What is it saying to mean to me personally? What is my response to God in light of it? Take your time with these questions. Remember, St. Teresa of Avila defines prayer as “frequent solitary conversation with Him who, as we know, loves us.”

As you let the passage move in you, be attentive to the voice of God speaking in your depths. He often communicates to us through the faculties of the soul - your thought, your imagination, your emotions, your desire. Let the mystery awaken and unfold within you by noting any words, phrases, ideas that move you in some way. Does it spark a memory? Give you a new insight? Instruct you? What emotion rises within you? These types of questions will help you be aware of what God is saying to you and to find the grace He intends for you to receive. This is Christian meditation and eventually it will lead you to a deepening desire for God alone, a sign of spiritual growth and maturation. If your prayer time is “dry” and nothing seems to come, do not be discouraged, but rather persist. Stay with it. Sometimes the grace or insight will come later in the day or the next week or sometime in the greater future. Do not be concerned if it delays, it will surely come.

Yield Yield to the Holy Spirit and the grace He brings. In Galatians 5:16 St. Paul instructs us to “walk by the Spirit and do not gratify the desires of the flesh.” The fruit of prayer is a transformed life filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22), one of which is joy. We “walk by the Holy Spirit” or “yield” to Him as we follow the promptings and receive the grace He gives us in prayer. But, St. John tells us in his epistle to “test every spirit” (1 John 4:1). A prompting of the Holy Spirit will never contradict Sacred Scripture nor the teachings of the Church inclusive of the Commandments and beatitudes; it will conform with our state in life; and it will bring with it such fruit as peace, hope, joy, steadfastness, modesty or humility, courage, rather than anxiety, despair, sloth, pride, fear or timidity. A holy excitement - zeal - may spring forward, but never an uneasy apprehension. Simply put - the Holy Spirit encourages us while the evil one discourages us.

Daily Passages for Meditation:

Day 1: Psalm 25:17

Day 2: Jeremiah 29:11

Day 3: Joel 2:25

Day 4: Malachi 4:2

Day 5: John 3:16

Day 6: John 10:10

Day 7: Philippians 1:6

Going Deeper

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever," says St. Paul to the Hebrews (13:8). Just as He healed the torments of hearts when He walked on the earth two thousand years ago, so does He desire to heal you today. Asking Him to enter into your painful memories and to touch your interior injuries with His healing love is what inner healing is all about. In inner healing God reveals in the light of truth what has been hidden in the darkness of your heart (Job 12:22; Daniel 2:22; Luke 8:17; 1 Corinthians 4:5).

To the extent that our interior injuries remain hidden, they exert a certain control over us and place us in a certain bondage to them. Consider, for example, a physical disease such as cancer. We may not know we have it, or perhaps we may have noticed some changes but didn't think they were anything serious. However, our ignorance of the disease doesn't curtail the disease. To greater or lesser extent, it affects us. And, without intervention, it could eventually kill us. Similarly, a wound to the heart exacts its toll as well. Like a cancer, its ill effects multiply and spread affecting all aspects of our life. Its poison distorts our self-perception, invades our view of the world and ourselves in it, compromises our relationships with others from spouses to children to extended family members to friends to bosses to colleagues, and cripples our capacity to reach our full potential as persons and as children of God. Finally, it debilitates our free will - knowingly or unknowingly we act out of the wound rather than out of a reasoned decision - causing potentially irreversible harm.

This is not God's plan for us. He wants to heal us and set us free. He wants us to know the fruit of redemption in this life and to experience its fullness in Heaven forever. Permitting Him to enter into the confines of our heart to begin a process of restoration is what He desires. He asks only for our permission. Once given, Jesus comes and pitches a tent in the territory of our wound. The Holy Spirit comes. And healing happens. We must cooperate with the healing grace, of course, but its efficacy is assured. It doesn't mean that all will be easy or comfortable or quick - like the therapy for cancer, the going may be rough before we get better - but joy will come in the morning (Psalm 30:5).

Going Deeper Continued

Following are two quotations from two tremendous saints. Both of them understood afflictions of the heart. St. Thérèse of Lisieux suffered from a deep depression as a child after the death of her mother when her sister Pauline, whom she called her “second mother,” left for the convent. So broken was her heart and so distraught her spirit, she was at the point of death. However, she was healed through the maternal beatitude and intercession of the Blessed Mother as she gazed upon her statue from her sick bed and asked for her intercession. Though she died from tuberculosis at the young age of twenty-four, so mature was she in the ways of God and heroic virtue that she was canonized a saint and named a Doctor of the Church in 1997 by Pope John Paul II.

Our second quote is given to us by St. Faustina Kowalska. St. Faustina Kowalska was one of the greatest mystics of the 20th century. A Polish religious sister, she received many supernatural visions of Jesus and various saints in the 1920’s and 1930’s. She was asked by Jesus to be His “little secretary” and record her experiences in what is now known as her Diary, “Divine Mercy in My Soul.” Like St. Thérèse of Lisieux, St. Faustina died at a young age from advanced tuberculosis, something which caused her great suffering as it had for Thérèse. Besides her physical suffering, however, she suffered from rejection and humiliation, as well as the deep interior pain from knowing the depths of God’s mercy and how we often reject Him. Both saints provide us with an example of how to maintain trust in God in the midst of life’s vicissitudes, no matter the trial or tribulation. And both witness to the joy of knowing God is with us in all things. I am confident both of them will be interceding for you as you prayerfully contemplate the words they give us.

Words of Wisdom from the Saints

“Let us not grow tired of prayer: confidence works miracles.” St. Thérèse of Lisieux

- The word confidence comes from the Latin root word *fid* which means “trust,” or *confidentia* meaning “firmly trusting, bold.” It connotes an “assurance or belief in the good will or veracity of another.” With this in mind, reread the above quote by St. Thérèse of Lisieux. What connection do you see between prayer and confidence in God? Confidence and miracles?
- On a scale of 1 -10, with 1 being minimally and 10 being incredibly, to what extent do you firmly trust in God to bring you healing and hope?
- How can the example of St. Thérèse inspire you to be bold and confident in God?

“All your miseries have been consumed in the flame of my love, like a little twig thrown into a roaring fire.” Jesus to St. Faustina Kowalska

- How consoling are these words! In your heart, hear Jesus speaking them to you. What “twig” of misery would you like to throw into the consuming flame of love He has for you? Do you have the trust and boldness to surrender it to Him? Why or why not? Ask Him for the courage and confidence you need.
- To aid you to trust God with your current struggle, recall a time when you have experienced God’s gentle and respectful love for you during a time of trial or difficulty? Recount this experience in your journal. With this memory in mind, ask our Blessed Mother to intercede for you so that you might move forward in receptivity, trust and surrender. You may wish to write a prayer to her to express your petition.

Words to Grow By

Two unique words used in the video lesson were *ezer kenegdo* and *kyros*. Below are the definitions. Consider the questions following each.

Ezer Kenegdo - A Hebrew phrase consisting of two words. Ezer originally had two meanings depending on how it was pronounced. It could mean to *rescue/to save* or to be *strong*. In the Old Testament the word Ezer is used 21 times. In every case it was used in a military context as in the case of a warrior. The Hebrew word *Kenegdo* means *opposite as to him* or *corresponding as to him*. Put together, it connotes a soldier or warrior in battle standing alongside another soldier or warrior to be strong for him and/or to be there to rescue or save him.

- In the video lesson, Mary is referred to as Jesus' *ezer kenegdo*. In addition to His passion and death, how else do we see the Blessed Mother acting in this role toward Jesus?
- Have you had an *ezer kenegdo* in your life? Maybe more than one? Who were they and how did they stand with you in your battle? How were they strong for you? Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for them, and ask God to show you your current *ezer kenegdo* as you journey to joy.

Kairos - An ancient Greek word that means the opportune or appointed time for action or for something to occur, as opposed to Chronos time which is the sequential or chronological way in which time is measured. In the biblical sense, *Kairos* time is God's time to act, an appointed time of fulfillment. One measures minutes and the other measures moments.

- One of God's attributes is that He is *omniscient* or all-knowing. Therefore, He knows the most opportune time for His action in all things. Consider this in light of His dealings with you and His desired or appointed time for healing the wounds of your heart. Is it possible that this is that time? What makes you think it is or isn't?
- Recall a *Kairos* moment in your life. Record it here.
- Servant of God Catherine Doherty said, "Faith walks simply, childlike, between the darkness of human life and the hope of what is to come." How does this quote inspire you?

In Closing

*"Jesus, you know exactly what is going on.
You are all I have, and you know all things.
Come to my help."*

-St. Jeanne Jugan

Lord, no matter my life story, give me the will to love you as you love,
without counting the cost. Amen