



Read the following Gospel passages to the youth:

Mark 9:21-29:

And he said, "From childhood. 22 And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." 23 Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" 25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" 26 Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. 28 And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" 29 So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

Mark 1:40-45:

40 Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." 41 Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." 42 As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. 43 And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, 44 and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.

Have the youth ask themselves, what stands out to them. How can they relate to any of the verses or people? What weaknesses are shown? Do we have weaknesses that we can pray about, in the same manner as the boy's father or the leper?

Give an example of what a prayer using these scriptural verses would look like. E.g.,:

"God, you know my weaknesses and I know you still look at me with love. I know that my existence here today is because of Your love and compassion for me. Have mercy and compassion on me as You had for the boy and his father. Have mercy on me and touch my heart and weakness and remove the leprosy from my heart. Have mercy and compassion on me and remove those things which tie me down and separate me from You. Be patient with me and reach Your loving arms to me and embrace me with Your love and kindness. Through the intercessions of St. Mary and [insert patron saint or intercessor] and all Your saints. Amen."

In this way, we can not only learn about God and His relationship with humanity, we can use scripture to deepen our own relationship with God. We learn about who God is through scripture. He reveals Himself and His covenants with us through scripture and Christ, the Logos and express image of God the Father.

In seeing how God dealt with people, I can see how He can and wants to deal with me. Use the scripture to learn about God. In learning about Him, I begin to understand His traits and power and desire for me in my life, which I can use in my own prayers and spiritual life.



Difference between meditation and interpretation

- We do not interpret the Bible; we meditate on what we read.
- For interpretation, it is a must to have the writing of the Holy Church Fathers, so we can understand the spirit of how they approach the text.
- There is freedom in meditation, but our meditations must be aligned with the proper interpretation. But we are not ones with the authority to interpret the Holy Sacred text that is Divinely inspired
- We listen to the church fathers and their interpretations of the text because they were either there when it happened or were taught by the apostles who were there and taught by Christ. Their word is credible.
- So we can never understand the Bible outside of the context of the writing of the Church fathers.

“The apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ, who was sent from God. The Christ is therefore from God and the apostles from the Christ”- St. Clement of Rome

What Christ taught, the Apostles preached and the Fathers kept. - St. Athanasius

“I exhort you and encourage you and will not stop encouraging you to pay attention to not only what is said here, but when you are at home also you should occupy yourself with the reading of the Holy Scriptures. Let no one say such cold words as “I am busy with my issues, “I have obligations in the city”, “I have a wife and children to feed”, “It is not my duty to read scripture but it is for those who renounced everything, the monks and celibates. What are you saying!/? You who live in the city with such cares need it more, you need all the more help, for you are wounded, for often with such cares. The reading of scripture is a great defense against sin, ignorance of scripture is a great misfortune and great abyss, not knowing any of God's word is a disaster, which leads to heresy and turns all upside down” – St. John Chrysostom