



## *Living with Christ in Small Groups*

# Sharing Our Faith, Sharing our Lives

Living with Christ is a personal experience but it is never just private. It always involves sharing his companionship with others. Just as the risen Jesus shared his insights about scripture and a meal with his companions (Luke 24), so we follow his example and share our beliefs and practices.

A faith-sharing group or Small Christian Community (SCC) provides a simple way to gather with others, read scripture, reflect on its meaning and share our insights with one another. .

### Two Sessions Each Month

To encourage this faith sharing with others, each month we include everything you need for two faith-sharing sessions called **Exploring the Scriptures**.

Gathering a group for faith sharing does not require any special permission or elaborate

materials. Many groups begin by gathering for reading, reflection, discussion and prayer about the Sunday readings.

Each session is built on the fourfold pattern of the eucharist (*take, bless, break, share*) which is correlated to the 4 essentials that SCCs stress for each meeting: community building, praying together, sharing about scripture or some other theme for their spiritual growth and outreach.

Thus each session encourages us to develop a biblically-based eucharist-centered spirituality that we can share with others.

Our spiritual lives blossom to their full potential in community with others and through our greater participation in the shared life and mission of the Christian community.

■ STEVE MUELLER  
Editor@LivingwithChrist.us

## EXPLORING THE SCRIPTURES 1

## The Man Born Blind: Learning to See and Believe

Find a quiet spot where you can read, reflect and pray. If you want to record your spiritual thoughts and experiences, have your spiritual journal handy.

### Take

Take a few silent moments to become prayerful and centered.

Today we consider the sign recounted in John's gospel of Jesus' curing a man born blind (*for more on this reading see This Month's Scriptures, p. 2*). Since we live in such a visually-oriented culture, seeing is a natural analogy for knowing. The movement from blindness to sight can parallel the journey from spiritual ignorance to insight. Likewise, some who now "see" reveal that they are, in fact, blind to spiritual reality.

The story of the blind man reminds us that often our first

enlightenment experience does not give us an adequate faith. He thus serves as an example of the challenge we each face to grow in our understanding of who Jesus is and how Jesus' presence changes our lives.

The blind man also shows how our path from an initial recognition of Jesus to a more adequate understanding can be triggered by the challenging questions of others. Sometimes it is only through an agonizing series of testings that we are finally forced to examine our traditional faith and come to a much more profound faith than when we first encountered Christ. Consider:

- ◉ How has my understanding of who Jesus is changed over the years?
- ◉ What most caused me to change my ideas about Jesus?

- ◉ How has this new awareness made me change my actions?

### Bless

After you have had time to consider the questions and discuss or write down your responses, offer a spontaneous prayer.

You may wish to use the Opening or the Alternate Opening Prayer from the Fourth Sunday of Lent (p. 54 in your booklet), or the Opening Prayer from today.

### Break

#### Scripture Reading

(John 9:1-41, taken from Sunday March 2, pp. 57-59)

Read **John 9:1-41**. Pause for 1-2 minutes of silence to be attentive to God's message today.

#### Reflection

The following is an excerpt adapted from Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, (who lived in the late second century) from his defense of Christianity addressed to Autolycus.

#### Learning to See God

If you say: "Show me your God," I will say to you: "Show me what kind of person you are, and I will show you my God. Show me whether the eyes of your mind can see."

It is like this. Those who can see with the eyes of their bodies are aware of what is happening in this life. They get to know things that are different from each other. They distinguish light and darkness, ugliness and beauty, elegance and ugliness, proportion and lack of proportion, excess and defect.

So it is with the eyes of our mind in their capacity to see God. God is seen by those who have the capacity to see, provided that they keep the eyes of their mind open.

All have eyes, but some have eyes that are shrouded in darkness, unable to see the sun's light. Because the blind cannot see it, it does not follow that the sun does not shine. The blind must trace the cause back to themselves and their eyes.

In the same way, you have eyes in your mind that are shrouded in darkness because of your sins and evil deeds. A person's soul should be clean, like a mirror reflecting light. If there is rust on the mirror, one's face cannot be seen in it.

In the same way, no one who has sin within can see God. But if you want, you can be healed. Entrust yourself to the doctor, to the One who will be able to open the eyes of your mind and heart. Who is this doctor? It is God, who heals and gives life through God's Word and God's wisdom.

If you understand this, and live in purity and holiness and justice, you may see God. But, before all, faith and the fear of God must take the first place in your heart, and then you will understand all this. When you have laid aside mortality and been clothed in immortality, then you will see God according to your merits. God raises up your flesh to immortality along with your soul, and then,

once made immortal, you will see the immortal One, if you believe in him now.

## Share

### Exploring Today's Reading

To explore this gospel's meaning, consider these questions and discuss or write down your responses if you wish.

- ▶ How does the blind man help me understand my faith encounter with Jesus?
- ▶ In what sense is the vision of the Pharisees darkened?
- ▶ In what sense is the healed man now able to see better than the Pharisees?
- ▶ When have other people's questions forced me to find out more about my beliefs?
- ▶ Jesus brought light to the darkened physical world of the blind man. What light does Jesus bring to the man's spiritual world?
- ▶ What is the evidence of that light?

- ▶ What light does Jesus shed on my world?

### Taking the Word to the World

Identify one or more specific ways in which you might be prepared to live as one who "sees" and believes in Jesus.

- ▶ What can I do at home or at work this week to deepen my awareness of what I believe about Jesus?

Close by deciding on some specific, practical thing to do either individually or together with others this coming week.

### Closing Prayer

Be quiet and attentive to Christ's presence with you—where he wants to dwell right now.

Close with a spontaneous prayer, one chosen from your *Living with Christ* booklet or from our daily Morning or Evening prayers on our Web site, or this prayer from St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109):

**O Lord,  
you are my Lord and my God,  
yet I have never seen you.  
You have created  
and redeemed me,  
and have conferred on me  
all my good,  
yet I know you not.  
I was created in order  
that I might know you,  
but I have not yet attained  
the goal of my creation.  
I confess, O Lord,  
and give you thanks,  
that you have created me  
in your image, so that  
I might be mindful of you  
and contemplate  
and love you.  
I seek not to understand  
in order that I may believe,  
rather, I believe in order that I  
may understand. Amen.**

If you are gathering with others, now is a good time to listen to or sing an appropriate song (*which can be downloaded from our Web site*) and then share a sign of peace with one another.