

- strengthen our trust in God, and show others how they too can trust in God's mercy?
- ◇ Healing of the sick was an outward sign of God's mercy, and something that has continued in the Anointing of the Sick. How can we help to show others the healing power of God's Mercy?

### **RESPOND** (15 minutes)

*No sharing would be complete without a commitment to putting our faith in practice. You may like to share what you have decided upon and /or keep a record of your response.*

- ◇ What can you do to support the sick and housebound in your parish?
- ◇ What Jesus did for the blind man was spiritual but it was also practical. Go and visit someone who is suffering, spend some quality time with them and do something practical for them.
- ◇ Pray for those who are ill, those who care for them and for those who work in health and social care.

### **Closing Prayer**

*The leader, or another member of the group, then leads the group in the closing prayer.*

Gracious and loving God  
as we take Communion to the sick and housebound  
help us in your mercy  
to bring them your healing in body and soul,  
through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen



## **Week Four, Meeting Mercy**

*By the Pool*

### **GATHER** (30 mins)

#### **Living our faith**

*If you wish, share something of how last week's session has influenced your thoughts and actions.*

#### **Opening prayer**

*Grant, almighty God, through our yearly observance of Lent, that we may grow in understanding of the riches hidden in Christ and by worthy conduct pursue their effects.*

*We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

### **LISTEN TO EXPERIENCE/Living our faith**

*Take a few minutes to read the following reflection silently or aloud*

Good health is something we all hope for and wish one another. If someone is taken ill, we pray that they will get better soon. However, we may know someone, or maybe even ourselves, who have an illness that is serious and prolonged, or perhaps it is a permanent disability. We pray for them too and ask God to bless them to be with them in their suffering. We accompany them, visit them and care for them. You might say that we are allowing God to work through us.

Pope St John Paul II who became Pope in 1978, was a keen sportsman, enjoying jogging, swimming and hiking in the mountains, and



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was very fond of football. Over his 27 years as Pope however, he was seriously injured by an assassination attempt, had a number of cancer scares and in his last few years succumbed to Parkinson's Disease, having difficulty speaking and hearing, and suffering severe osteoarthritis. In February 2005, his health deteriorated and he had to have a tracheotomy because of breathing problems. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005, now back in his private residence, his condition worsened and he was close to death.

Described as "serene and lucid" to the end, John Paul managed to speak several times before finally losing consciousness. When he was told about the thousands of young people singing and calling his name outside his window in St Peter's Square he said: "All my life I have been searching for you. Now you have found me."

*Take a few moments of silence to reflect on the following question, and then share your thoughts.*

### **Share**

- ◇ What do you think Pope St. John Paul meant by his comment, "I have searched for you, and now you have come to me"?

### **EXPLORE THE SCRIPTURES (45 minutes)**

*Instructions: Some time before the next meeting, the leader may ask a member of a group to read the Gospel for the fourth Sunday of Lent Year A.*

#### **Gospel: John 9:1-41**

*Take some time for silent reflection after the Scripture passage is read; then read the following reflection silently or aloud.*

Jesus took the initiative to cure the blindness of the blind beggar (9:10). Then he sought him to offer the gift of believing in who Jesus really is. The healed man already knows that Jesus is a prophet (9:17), that he has unique power (9:32) and that he comes from God (9:33). His profound gesture of worship now shows his faith in Jesus as divine. His seeing is one thing; his believing is something more.

The whole story of the blind beggar's cure is summarised in a brief final teaching from Jesus (39-41). Jesus came to give sight to those who

recognise their blindness, and to show the blindness of those who think they already know all they need to know. When the Pharisees near him overhear his teaching for the cured blind man and the disciples with him (9:2), they reject any suggestion that they are blind. They really cannot see, Jesus tells them bluntly because their stubborn refusal to believe in him keeps them locked in their blindness.

The mission of Jesus was to preach the good news and to bring healing; to restore the friendship between God and humanity. Healing of the sick was an outward sign of God's mercy, and something that has continued. In the early Church, St James says, "Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven" (James 5:14-15).

In the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, Pope Francis notes that the prayers are not just for encouragement, but that through faith we will receive mercy and our lives will be transformed. God's love goes before us, and if we open ourselves to God he will come to meet us in love – and where our sickness is of the spirit, where there is sin, we can trust that God is always with us ready to show his mercy.

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick reminds us of each person's dignity, and that in caring for those who are ill, we care for Jesus himself. Pope Benedict tells us that in the dust and spittle that Jesus uses to make the paste to put over the blind man's eyes, he is showing us a new creation, where the blind will see; yet for those, such as the Pharisees who think they already see, in rejecting the blind man and Jesus, they will always remain blind.

### **REFLECT**

*Take a few moments of silence to reflect on the following questions, then share your reflections.*

- ◇ What did Jesus teach us in curing the blind man, and how can we share this message?
- ◇ When we are sick or someone close to us is very ill, how can we