

Donnybrook

16 February 2022

Welcome

Our Gospel today is unusual: it tells the story of a two-stage cure, emphasised by the image of trees walking.

Topic

The place of this story is the key to its meaning.

Steps

In tomorrow's Gospel, Jesus ask who do people say I am and Peter confesses, accurately, that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus then goes on to predict his own suffering and death. Peter takes him aside and objects. In other words, Peter is half way on the journey of faith – like the blind man seeing trees. Peter does not yet grasp the place of suffering in Jesus' mission and destiny. My sympathy is with Peter: who *does* grasp the place of suffering?

We too are in that story in two ways. In a general way, all of us began a journey of faith as children. At some point as adults, we have to grow up on the faith and come to a grown-up grasp of the Christian faith. What is central, what is peripheral? I'm reminded of the aged Cistercian who was asked what did he believe at this point in his life? "I believe more and more in less and less." In other words, the core teachings of Christianity take centre stage.

We are in the story in another way too. Peter didn't grasp the place of suffering – who does? But we all do experience suffering, in bodily health, in relationships, in bereavement, sometimes mentally and psychologically. We can't walk around it or ignore it. Our spiritual task is to integrate such experiences into our spiritual journey – not so easy, as we see from the example of Peter – to learn to be part of common humanity, as we journey home to God.

Conclusion

One positive step would be to bring these difficult experiences directly into our prayer, to see them as part of our relationship with God and brings it before the Lord, who is able to help us because too has experienced what we go through.