

Saturday of the Fourth Week of Great Lent

“To Do Good or Evil?” (Regnum Christi Meditation for Wednesday of the Second Week in Ordinary Time by Father Walter Schu, LC - Audio Version can be found [here*](#)
Mark 3:1-6)

Mark 3:1-12 - Jesus entered the synagogue. There was a man there who had a withered hand. They watched him closely to see if he would cure him on the sabbath so that they might accuse him. He said to the man with the withered hand, “Come up here before us.” Then he said to them, “Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?” But they remained silent. Looking around at them with anger and grieved at their hardness of heart, he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately took counsel with the Herodians against him to put him to death. Jesus withdrew toward the sea with his disciples. A large number of people followed from Galilee and from Judea. Hearing what he was doing, a large number of people came to him also from Jerusalem, from Idumea, from beyond the Jordan, and from the neighborhood of Tyre and Sidon. He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him. He had cured many and, as a result, those who had diseases were pressing upon him to touch him. And whenever unclean spirits saw him, they would fall down before him and shout, “You are the Son of God.” He warned them sternly not to make him known.

Introductory Prayer: Lord, I believe in you. Thank you for the gift of faith, more precious than life itself. I hope in you. May the dark waters of doubt never break through my dike of hope. I love you. I want to let you purify me, so that my love for you may be more ardent and more courageous.

Petition: Lord, help me to bear witness to you even in adverse circumstances.

1. **“They Watched Him Closely”:** At the beginning of his public ministry, Christ already incurs the bitter opposition of the Pharisees. Having reduced them to silence in a wheat field, Christ bravely enters the synagogue to confront them once again. There the Pharisees are in the first places of honor, and they watch his every move, hoping he will cure against the laws of the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. The Pharisees were right about one thing. They did well to observe Christ closely. If only they had done so with the right spirit:

to learn from him and to glorify God for the wonders he did through him. How closely do we watch Christ in our own lives? How readily do we perceive his actions through the circumstances of the day? How often do we glorify God for the great things Christ does and longs to do in us?

2. **To Do Good or Evil?** Christ obliges the Pharisees. With fearless courage he calls the man with the withered hand forward, so that no one can mistake what he is about to do. Then he puts his antagonists in a dilemma with two clear questions. First: “Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath rather than to do evil?” “They are bound to admit that it is lawful to do good; and it is a good thing he proposed to do. They are bound to deny that it is lawful to do evil; and, yet, surely it is an evil thing to leave a man in wretchedness when it is possible to help him.” (William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark*, pp. 68-69) Then Christ asks the second question: “Is it lawful to save life rather than to destroy it?” “Here he is driving the thing home. He is taking steps to save this wretched man’s life; they are thinking out methods of killing Christ. On any reckoning it is surely a better thing to be thinking about helping a man than it is to be thinking of killing a man. No wonder they had nothing to say!” (Ibid.)

3. **Angered by Their Hardness of Heart:** Seldom does the Gospel show Christ angry. Here his anger is provoked by the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and their hardness of heart. They close themselves off from his message of salvation. What happens when someone definitively closes his heart to Christ? The Pharisees, the defenders of the law and Jewish customs, were bitter enemies of the Herodians, who collaborated with King Herod and the Romans. Yet this Gospel relates the chilling fact that these two joined forces to plot to kill Jesus. They are united not by the intrinsic force of goodness, but by the malignant power of evil. Do I at times make small concessions to hypocrisy, envy or even hatred? These could slowly harden my heart toward Christ. Am I willing to be courageous like Christ and endure even bitter opposition for the sake of the Gospel?

Conversation with Christ: Thank you, Lord, for your goodness and courage. How small I feel when I compare myself with you in the Gospel. What an infinite distance separates us! Thank you for calling me—with all of my weakness, sins, and limitations—to be your apostle. Help me never to surrender to evil in my heart, but to grow in goodness of heart in order to be more like you.

Resolution: I will do a good deed for someone today, even if it is difficult, in order to bear witness to Christ.

* *The Gospel of Mark 3:1-12 is read over two days in the Roman Catholic Church. The above meditation is based on Mark 3:1-6, the one below is based on Mark 3:7-12.*

“Touching the Lord” (based on Regnum Christi Meditation for Thursday of the Second Week in Ordinary Time by Father Walter Schu, LC - [Audio Version](#) - Mark 3:7-12)

Jesus withdrew toward the sea with his disciples. A large number of people followed from Galilee and from Judea. Hearing what he was doing, a large number of people came to him also from Jerusalem, from Idumea, from beyond the Jordan, and from the neighborhood of Tyre and Sidon. He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him. He had cured many and, as a result, those who had diseases were pressing upon him to touch him. And whenever unclean spirits saw him, they would fall down before him and shout, “You are the Son of God.” He warned them sternly not to make him known.

Introductory Prayer: Lord, this time of prayer should be everything for me: the moment that I long for, the food that sustains me, the comfort that strengthens me. I know that you are at work in me even when I don’t feel you and don’t even seem able to perceive your presence. I want to pray fervently and from the heart, not just with my mind.

Petition: Lord, help me to touch you in this moment of prayer. Help me to touch you in the Eucharist so that your presence will transform me.

1. **Was Jesus Afraid?** In yesterday’s Gospel text, Jesus silenced the Pharisees in the synagogue. So incensed were they against the Lord that they began to plot with the Herodians to kill him. Now Jesus has retreated from the synagogues to the lakeshore and the open fields. Was Christ afraid? Was he running from his enemies? Hardly. The Lord was simply aware that his hour had not yet come. When it does approach, he will embrace it by marching resolutely to Jerusalem and his passion and death. The ones who really are afraid are the demons. They recognize that God is manifesting his power through Christ, and they tremble before him. The Son of God has come to win back what Satan’s lies have stolen. Does Christ’s power accompanying me in my life give me the courage I need to confront any situation as his witness?
2. **To Touch the Lord:** In this vivid Gospel scene, the crowds of stricken humanity clamor around Jesus. Jews and gentiles journey from the far away regions of Idumea to the south, and Tyre and Sidon to the north, to catch a glimpse of the Master, to hear him speak words that no one has ever spoken before—to touch him and be healed of their infirmities. Oh, that we too had lived during the time of Christ in order to touch him and be cured of our sadness and selfishness, our heartache and egotism,

our loneliness and lies, and even our physical ailments! Did Christ love those people who surrounded him by the lakeshore more than he loves us? No. He enables us to touch him more easily than they—every time we receive him in the Eucharist. Then why are we not yet healed? The disciples once cried out to Jesus, “Increase our faith!” And he replied, “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed...”

3. **The Person of Christ: Irresistible:** How can we grow in our faith in Christ? How can we, too, experience the irresistible attraction of his person like the crowds in Mark’s Gospel did? Nothing fills our life as much as contemplating the figure of Christ and perceiving the irresistible power of attraction he exercises through the centuries. Draw close to him, and in the depths of your souls contemplate him in all of the beauty of his human and divine stature. Along with the Eucharist, it is through prayer that we can come to touch Christ. Prayer is the most solemn moment for confessing our love; it is the *raison d’être* of our life, the ideal of our apostolate, the nourishment of our whole existence.

Conversation with Christ: Thank you, Lord, for letting me catch a glimpse of who you are through this meditation. Help me to respond to the attraction of your person with my whole life and to hold nothing back from you.

Resolution: I will visit Christ in the Eucharist or make a spiritual communion to thank him for his love and to contemplate him in the beauty of his divine and human stature.