

Read



Acts of the Apostles

7:55-60

Psalms 97:1-2, 6-7, 9

Revelation 22:12-14,
16-17, 20

John 17:20-26

LIVING THE WORD

Seventh Sunday of Easter

June 2, 2019



REFLECTION

There are many people in history whose reactions to violence and death can inspire the rest of us. These heroes often choose nonviolence in the midst of extremely difficult situations. Consider the Church's first martyr, Stephen. Being stoned to death must be extraordinarily painful, lonely, and scary. Yet Stephen chooses to focus on heaven and prays as he faces imminent death. In fact, he prays both for himself and for those who are stoning him. He does not react with violence. What strength. What faith. What inspiration. As patron saint of deacons, masons, coffin makers and those with headaches, St. Stephen continues to encourage Catholics to live their faith until the very end and to always pray for those who seem to be vehemently opposed to the Catholic faith.

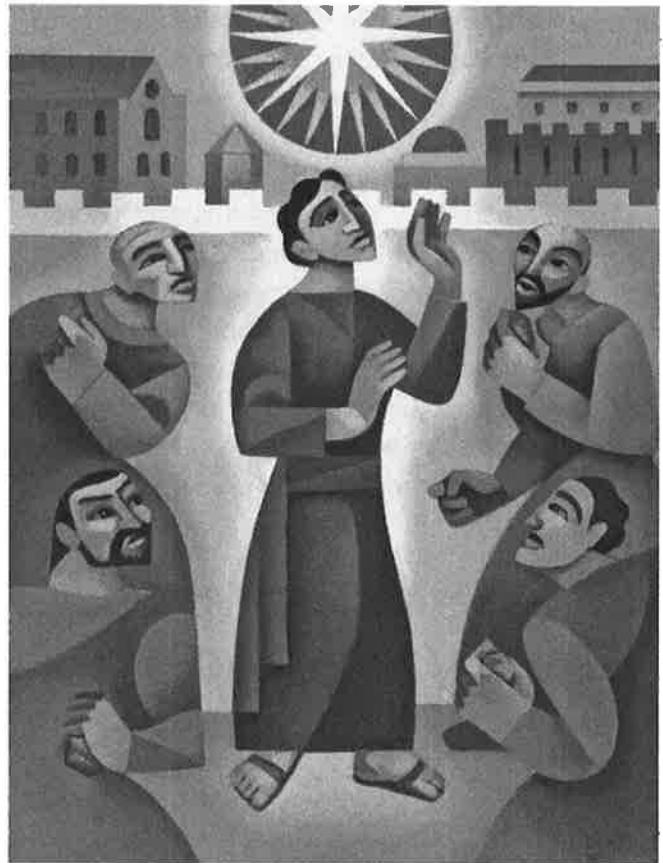
? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What qualities of the saints inspire you to live your faith out loud?
- ❖ Stephen forgave his murderers. Why? Whom do you need to forgive?



ACTION

Research an inspiring saint and read about their martyrdom (www.catholic.org/saints is a good website to use). St. Stephen's story inspires us to look outside ourselves in the face of death. He prayed for his torturers! Look into his story or maybe your namesake or Confirmation name. What helped this saint to live a life devoted to God and in service to his people?



Check out www.catholic.org/saints.



June 2, 2019

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LECTIONARY #61C

Acts of the Apostles 7:55-60

Psalm 97:1-2, 6-7, 9

Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20

John 17:20-26

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

Each reading today zooms in on the unique role that Jesus Christ played in establishing the Kingdom. He is the alpha and the omega. He is the one to reveal the true love of the Father, and he is worth dying for, as St. Stephen illustrates in Acts of the Apostles. Thus, this Sunday allows us to see the holistic beauty of Jesus' mission and the critical importance of his message to our own salvation. The Gospel includes a prayer Jesus prayed shortly before being arrested and taken to his trial and death. It is a prayer showcasing his immense love for those who do not yet understand, nor seem to want to understand, and why he is doing what he is doing. Jesus reveals just how much he loves us. He wants the disciples to become aware of his love, for this is the only way they will ever experience abundant and true life.

Q FOCUS: *Jesus greatly loves all people.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

This is the second to last Sunday of Easter, the finish line of these joyous days of celebration is near. However, in the close of Easter Time, we are yet again reminded that each day of celebration is meant to remind us of the great victory that we will never be able to fully understand or grasp. June 3 is also the memorial of St. Charles Lwanga and Companions. In the name of his faith, St. Charles refused to give into immoral and impure activities.

We honor his faith and devotion to the Gospel and recognize that he—like St. Stephen, the first martyr—truly did know the Father by way of Jesus' teaching and testimony, and lived (and died) within that faith.

Church Teaching Connection

"Christ always gives his Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain, reinforce, and perfect the unity that Christ wills for her" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 820).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 17:20-26

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus prayed, saying: "Holy Father, I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that

you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me. I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them.”

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

► **Do you think it's weird that Jesus “prayed”?** Isn't prayer talking to God . . . and isn't Jesus, well, God?

In this instance, the Son of God is speaking to the Father, and he's doing so not on his own behalf (as we typically do when we pray) but on behalf of all of us. Jesus is talking to the Father and asking that we come to understand the Truth.

► **What is Jesus praying for specifically?**

He is asking the Father to unite all peoples, to unite them together, to unite them to God, to unite them in faith, to unite them in love. He wants everyone to be united in their understanding that all Jesus said and did was for them and their eternal salvation.

► **Easier said than done, right?**

It seems easy for Jesus to pray these words moments before he is arrested.

► **But what will he do to back up his claim of unifying the people to God the Father?**

He will die. He will do the one thing needed to allow us to be in union with the Father in heaven. He will sacrifice himself so that the gates of heaven can be opened to us. We will truly come to know

he was sent to live out his unending love, even to the end.

► **This Gospel is a bit abstract, isn't it?**

It's just Jesus' kind of rambling to the Father. But, to give it more context and perspective, and to see the great power of these words that we are to be united with the Father, we can look to the First Reading.

Read Acts 7:50–55 to give yourself some perspective.

A man named Stephen is being tormented, taunted, and persecuted for his belief in Jesus. He doesn't give in to the demands of his persecutors, though. Instead, he lifts his eyes to heaven. What he sees is exactly what Jesus prays for in the Gospel: a vision of the unity of Father and Son and what will one day be his own inheritance. Stephen is unafraid of what will happen to him, and so he continues to profess his faith even to the point of being stoned to death by those who don't understand.

► **What are Stephen's final words? Whose final words do they remind you of?**

Jesus' prayer is answered in the witness of St. Stephen, the first martyr of the Church. He is unified to Jesus, who is unified to the Father. In his death, he emulates Christ's own sacrifice. With his faith, Stephen is a testament to the unending love that all Christians are called to live in and show.

In a very real way, today's readings are meant to give us encouragement in our own fights and struggles to live the faith. Jesus prayed for us because he knew our journey of faith wouldn't be easy. We are told the story of St. Stephen to encourage us in what we know is sometimes going to be a difficult and challenging path. The Second Reading from the Book of Revelation even reminds us of the unending power of Jesus, who is to come.

These readings are no small matter on this second to last Sunday of Easter, for they are meant to fortify us as we wrap up this time of great celebration and return to the ordinary days of the liturgical year, when we often feel the drag, attack, and occasional sufferings in our faith.

Jesus wants us to be perfect in him, united in love with him. He asked for this, and it will be delivered to us. He wants us unified, in him, as one

Church. This is our mission, to be unified by way of his unending, unfailing love.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 208.

Jesus prays for his Apostles, and the Church, to understand his mission, which is to establish unity between us and the Father.

This unity is something we must strive for. This joining with God and joining together is not something that passively happens; it only occurs when we respond wholeheartedly in faith to all that the Lord requires of us.

St. Stephen, the martyr, is an example of this response of faith, even to the end remaining steadfast in his belief that the Lord's will and plan are greater than his own. People pray for us so that we can have the same faith of Stephen, which will lead us to the right hand of the Father.

Act on the Word

You will need paper, notecards, and writing utensils.

Give each teen a sheet of paper or a notecard and have them write the numbers one through ten down the side of the paper. At each spot, teens should write a prayer intention for either themselves, someone they know, or a situation they are aware of. This intention should be somewhat in the style of Jesus' own intentions in today's Gospel: a prayer for those who need something, unity or understanding, healing or aid, or awareness of what God has to offer to them. After they have written out ten prayer intentions, spend some time discussing these intentions and why they are on their heart or bring the teens to a place to pray for these intentions using the Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, or something comparable.

Closing Prayer

*O God,
you sent your Son Jesus into the world
that we might know your love
and be filled with the Holy Spirit.
Refresh our awareness that we are not alone
because your Holy Spirit dwells within us
and renews the face of the earth through all who
believe in you.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.

St. Joseph, pray for us.

St. Stephen, first martyr, pray for us.

All holy men and women, pray for us.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for Pentecost, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.