

Read

Isaiah 66:18-21

Psalm 117:1, 2

Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13

Luke 13:22-30

LIVING THE WORD

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 25, 2019



REFLECTION

When you play a sport, you must be disciplined in eating healthy, learning the plays, practicing every day, and giving your all in games or competitions. When your friends invite you to a late movie and you have a game at 8 AM the next day, it takes discipline to decline the invitation. If your coach asks you to play a position that challenges your skill set because your teammate was injured, you figure out a way to play with your whole heart and soul. It takes discipline. Sometimes it is not all glory and fame. Most of it is grinding work with little triumph. There can be conflict and ego that distracts the team. However, most people join the team to feel a part of a community and to work toward a goal. As Catholics, we do this but in a spiritual sense. We go to Mass on a weekly basis, we pray daily, and we try to live the teachings we hold dear that give us discipline in our moral and spiritual lives. Jesus asks us to go beyond these rituals and truly embrace the faith as a discipline that will lead to changing the world.

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Where in your life do you need more discipline?
- ❖ How might you allow God to enter more fully into your life?

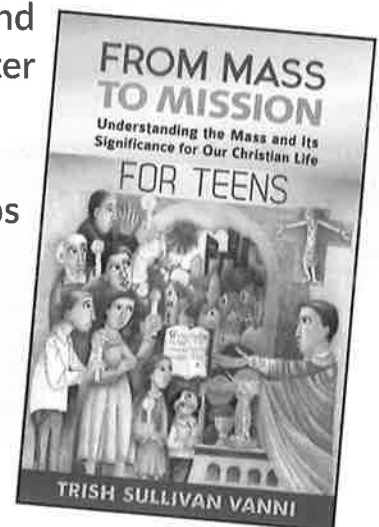


ACTION

Go to Mass every day for a week. If you live in an urban area, then you will be able to find a Mass every day either early in the morning or around dinner time. It will not be easy to coordinate your schedule as you may need to invite someone with you just to get a ride to the church. In a rural area, this may be more difficult. Attempting this discipline will be like entering the narrow gate Luke mentions in today's Gospel. Spiritual discipline takes time, courage, and a lot of discipline. Reflect on your resistance and desire to be in God's presence through the sacred ritual of liturgy. "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life."



Check out the resource *From Mass to Mission: Understanding the Mass and Its Significance for Our Christian Life for Teens*. It will help you understand the Mass better and make connections to how it helps change the world.





August 25, 2019

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #123C

Isaiah 66:18-21

Psalm 117:1, 2

Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13

Luke 13:22-30

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

In today's Gospel, Jesus paints the stark picture of many who attempt to enter through the narrow gate, yet are not strong enough to do so. He makes a distinction between those who say they know him, and those who act as his disciples. It is not enough to say we follow Jesus, we must do so with our lives.

Q FOCUS: *Discipleship has a cost.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Living as a person of faith is sometimes challenging for teens among their peers at school or in activities as well as at home with family. St. Monica (August 27) and St. Augustine (August 28), whose memorials we celebrate this week, are examples of the ways in which we may influence others to follow Christ, through prayer and witness.

Church Teaching Connection

Followers of Jesus Christ, disciples, are called to embrace Christ's way of love in their daily lives. This is not always easy, and yet is a meaningful and fulfilling way of life. To be a disciple means to have a share in Christ's mission and to be in communion with Christ as members of Christ's Body (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 767, 787).

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

Luke 13:22-30

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

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

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

Jesus passed through towns and villages, teaching as he went and making his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" He answered them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough. After the master of the house has arisen and locked the door, then will you stand outside knocking and saying, 'Lord, open the door for us.' He will say to you in reply, 'I do not know where you are from.' And you will say, 'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.' Then he will say to you, 'I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers!' And there will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the

prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves cast out. And people will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at table in the kingdom of God. For behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

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:

Following Jesus is not always easy, is it? Living faith at home or school is sometimes challenging. Most of us can admit that we sometimes go through the motions. We go to Mass, or say a prayer in the morning, and think, “That is enough for now.” Or, perhaps we do not think about Christ or faith at all, and yet consider ourselves Christians.

This is the sort of lukewarm commitment that Jesus tackles in today's Gospel. He speaks strongly, and his message is clear: just because you call yourself his follower is not enough. You have to act like a disciple—be a disciple—in order to be one with Christ.

Let us step back for a moment and think about what being a follower of Jesus is all about. In this section of the Gospel according to Luke, from which this passage is taken, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. We know what happens when he arrives there. He endures his passion, is crucified, and dies. Ultimately, he is also risen from the dead.

As disciples, we are called to journey with Jesus, to take his teaching and his entire way of life to heart, including his willingness to suffer for the sake of God's love. We must die to all that is not in keeping with the love, mercy, forgiveness, and compassion of Christ, and we must embrace Jesus' way of self-giving love.

► What does being a disciple mean to you?

► What temptations are you faced with which get in the way of living as a disciple?

Jesus speaks of the narrow gate. He says that many will try to enter but will not be strong enough. Imagine yourself standing outside a door or gate that is both narrow and heavy.

► What keeps you from entering?

► What weighs you down?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Christian pastor who was killed by the Nazis during World War II, spoke of “costly grace.” He said that our faith in Jesus Christ directs us to realize that being a disciple calls us to accept the call to live as Christ in the world. We are able to accept Jesus' call through the grace of God, who gives us all that we need in order to be ready to fulfill our call as disciples. There is a cost of discipleship—we have to put aside our worldly desires for prestige, wealth, or power. And there is great freedom in accepting the call of Christ, through which we experience the empowering grace of God and the promise of eternal life.

Jesus describes people coming from all directions and reclining at table in the Kingdom of God, and he declares, “some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last” (Luke 13:30). Do you ever think of yourself as “first?” Perhaps you consider yourself a “good” person, or you see peers mistreating or bullying others and think to yourself, “I certainly do not act that way!” Yet, we are not to judge others, and are called instead to recognize our own sinfulness and the ways in which we fail to live as Christ's people.

► What would it mean to be “last” in today's culture?

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 18.

What does discipleship “look like”?

Who inspires you by the way in which he or she lives as a disciple?

What is the cost of discipleship for you at this time?

Act on the Word

If This, Then That

For this exercise, you will need paper and pens.

Read the Gospel again. Invite the teens to reflect quietly for a while about their experience of following Jesus in their daily lives.

Ask the teens to make two lists on paper: What gets in the way of living as disciples? What weighs them down? Tell them to be as honest with themselves as possible. Think of specific situations with peers or at home.

Break into pairs or small groups for sharing. Ideally, each small group should include an adult who participates in the conversation, sharing from his or her personal experience.

As the group shares, invite them to strategize responses to the things on their lists. If this gets in the way, then do what? If this weighs them down, then do what?

Discipleship Plan

For this activity, you will need paper, pens, and newsprint.

Begin with everyone together. Ask someone to be a notetaker, using the newsprint and a marker to record the key points offered during the discussion.

Ask the group to list the qualities and tasks of discipleship. Who are disciples? What do disciples do? How do they act? What do they not do? What are the rewards of following Christ? What are the challenges? What do they need to give up, and to give as disciples?

With this list visible to everyone, invite the teens to spend time reflecting on their own lives. How do they “measure up”? In what ways are they truly living as a disciple? Are there situations right now that call for a faith-led response or action? While the group is reflecting, develop your reflection for the prayer that comes next. Use some of the points from the group’s earlier discussion to paint the picture of discipleship, using the words and examples the teens used.

Following the time of reflection, call everyone back for a time of prayer. Make the Sign of the Cross. Pause, and reflect on the meaning of the Cross and of following Christ. Use the points you developed above.

Send the teens into small groups. Ask them to spend a few moments writing a plan for living as a disciple in the coming year. Give them prompts such as:

- ✧ I will follow Jesus with my life by . . .
- ✧ I will grow as a disciple by . . .
- ✧ When being a Christian is hard, I will . . .
- ✧ When others need encouragement, I will . . .
- ✧ I will place my trust and hope in Christ by . . .
- ✧ Offer specific suggestions based on the earlier discussion.

Once the teens have written their discipleship plan, invite them to share with others in their group.

Closing Prayer

*God of life,
send us your spirit to illuminate our path,
and grant us the wisdom to choose your gift of life
in our daily decisions.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday’s Mass, 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.