

Read



Wisdom 9:13-18b

Psalm 90:3-4, 5-6,
12-13, 14, 17

Philemon 9-10, 12-17

Luke 14:25-33

LIVING THE WORD

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 8, 2019



REFLECTION

Today's reading from the Book of Wisdom reminds us of some of the foundational truths of Christianity. Wisdom tells us the plans of God are beyond our control and our comprehension. We can fool ourselves into a false sense of security. We have lots of conveniences that give us control such as the temperature in our houses and cars, many restaurants to choose from, and computers with personalized music playlists and our favorite TV shows. If we live with that thinking, however, it will be very hard for us to deal with difficult times when loved ones become seriously ill, or have an accident, or lose a job. Though God never intends for us to experience evil, when bad things do happen he is with us and helps us surrender to him, allowing him to be in control. Being willing to forsake our sense of control allows us to live in peace and trust of God.



ACTION

To practice giving up our sense of control to God, challenge yourself to give up a convenience each day by choosing one of the following: eat whatever your parents cook for you without requesting something different; allow a family member to choose the TV shows; wash dishes by hand instead of using a dishwasher; turn off the heating or cooling system in your car to and from school; or give up listening to your favorite music. It may be harder than you think! Say a prayer asking God to take control of your life each time you feel the difficulty the challenge presents to you.



Watch *The Tree of Life*, an allegorical film based on the Book of Job depicting the struggles of life.

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What surprised you about giving up a convenience this week?
- ❖ What things, technology, modern conveniences are you most attached to?
Write a letter to God offering it to him.



September 8, 2019

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #129C

Wisdom 9:13-18b

Psalm 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17

Philemon 9-10, 12-17

Luke 14:25-33

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

Discipleship requires commitment. As people of faith, we are called to put God first. This has bearing on how we spend our time, who we spend it with, and what we do with our lives. It calls us to leave all that is not consistent with discipleship behind. At the very heart of discipleship is the call to prefer Christ above all else.

Q FOCUS: *Commit to Christ before all else.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

As is the case for all who follow Jesus, your teens must heed the call to live as disciples to heart, searching their hearts and conforming their minds to Christ. This week on September 14, we celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, in which we reflect in a particular way on the gift and challenge of living discipleship.

Church Teaching Connection

In some ways, the call of discipleship can be boiled down to just a few key words: *Love, sacrifice, service, compassion, mercy, forgiveness.* And yet, living as a follower of Christ requires commitment and on-going conversion—a reorientation of our whole lives, away from sin and toward God (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1427-1429).

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 14:25-33

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.

Great crowds were traveling with Jesus, and he turned and addressed them, "If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him and say, 'This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.' Or what king marching into

battle would not first sit down and decide whether with ten thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops? But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms. In the same way, anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.”

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:

The crowds that were traveling with Jesus would have included some people who had heard him teach and watched him perform miracles for a long time. The Twelve Apostles and their family and friends, certainly. They would have known the sort of life to which Jesus was leading people: to be forgiving, patient, merciful, and compassionate. Others in the crowd would have been new to Jesus and his message. Some may have understood the commitment that is required in following Jesus, that to be a disciple of Jesus Christ means changing one's life. Not all would have known this yet, however.

Jesus speaks to all of these people in today's Gospel, and his message sounds firm, gruff, and bold. We must “hate” our family and even our own life in order to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Do not worry! Jesus is not asking us to “hate” anyone. People in Jesus' time as in our own used forceful, exaggerated language to make a point. But Jesus is making a serious point here. If we are really committed as Jesus' followers, we must prefer Christ above all else.

Think of a time in which following Jesus led you to turn down an invitation or to turn away from some sort of behavior.

► What happened?

Jesus says that we must prefer him over father and mother, sister, or brother. He wants our family to be God-centered. We can say that Christ should be the head of our household. In fact, we sometimes speak of the family as being the “domestic Church” (*Lumen gentium*, 11).

► In what ways is your family God-centered?

► What recent experience at home comes to mind, in which you and your family did or did not put Christ first?

► Does your commitment to Christ (or wavering in commitment) ever come between you and a family member?

Surely, Jesus is not only speaking of family. Ideally, all of our relationships would be Christ-centered, and certainly, we must be mindful to not foster relationships with others that will tempt us to act in ways that are not consistent with Christ.

Jesus also says that we are to “hate” our own life. Again, keep in mind, the word “hate” here is not what we think of when we hear this word. But Jesus is asking us to consider one of the key demands of discipleship: we must get beyond ourselves and any selfishness or self-centeredness if we are to follow him. Put bluntly, disciples are to live for God and others.

So, we must prefer Christ above all else, get beyond ourselves, and build Christ-centered relationships. And, as we hear next in the Gospel, we must carry our own cross. We must be prepared to weather the storms of life, and the demands of discipleship in faith, through faith. We must die to all that is not of Christ in our lives.

► What crosses do you bear right now?

► Is living as a Christian person sometimes a cross to bear? Why or how?

With all of this in mind, Jesus says that those who plan to follow him must be mindful of the demands of discipleship. We are never finished disciples, and growing as a follower of Jesus Christ is to have bearing on our lives, throughout our lives.

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 26.

In what ways do you put Christ above all else in your life?

Has your commitment to Christ grown stronger or weaker in the past six months?

What is the greatest gift of Christian life for you at this time?

Act on the Word

Discipleship Day-by-Day

Have newsprint and markers on hand for this exercise.

If your group is large, divide into smaller groups for this discussion. Invite the teens to walk through a typical week of their lives. Where are the opportunities to put Christ first? What are the challenges? How do they respond?

Ask teens to visually represent their discussion on newsprint. They may draw a calendar that shows one week, or a large clock that illustrates a typical day. Tell them to color-code the opportunities and challenges.

Once their week has been illustrated, invite the teens to divide into pairs for further conversation. How closely does the person's life resemble the large group picture? What are the specific challenges the person experiences in following Jesus Christ?

Christ: Yes or No?

For this activity, have note cards and pens on hand.

Divide your group into two teams (or four if your group is large). Tell each team to brainstorm scenarios in which putting Christ first is challenging. Give them a few examples to get started, such as wanting to stay in bed rather than going to Sunday Mass, or meeting a poor person on the street and crossing rather than encountering the person.

Ask the teams to write their scenarios on note cards. They need to be succinct but paint the picture well enough that others will understand the challenge.

Once the teams have created their scenarios, invite them to pose the challenge to the opposite team. How would they likely respond, for better or worse? How should they respond as a Christian person?

Singing the Song of Discipleship

This activity requires advance planning.

Invite a parish minister of music or the director of music to join your group for this activity. Ask him or her to talk about the process of selecting songs for the Sunday liturgy. What goes into choosing the music that is sung during Mass? How is the text a factor in the song selection?

Following the discussion, ask the teens to offer songs that speak of discipleship, and sing a verse (or more) together. If any of your group are musicians, insure that the music minister invites them to help to lead the singing.

Closing Prayer

*God our refuge and strength,
help us to carry our crosses with trust
and courage,
hoping in you always
to remain faithful to your covenant of love.
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.