

Read

Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14

Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13,
17, 19

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Luke 15:1-32 or 15:1-10

LIVING THE WORD

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 15, 2019



REFLECTION

Today's readings illustrate the freedom, love, and compassionate ear that God gives us in our relationship with him. The Gospel parable illustrates God's forgiving love. He is extreme with his mercy and willing to rekindle our relationship with him at any time (God's love is free!). God allows us to choose our own path, even when it grieves him, because God respects our free will. Notice that in the reading from Exodus, Moses is able to convince God to give the Israelites another chance. Our parent-child relationship with God means that he loves to listen to and hear us. At the same time, we should also respect his desires for us and trust his plan if God does not grant our requests.

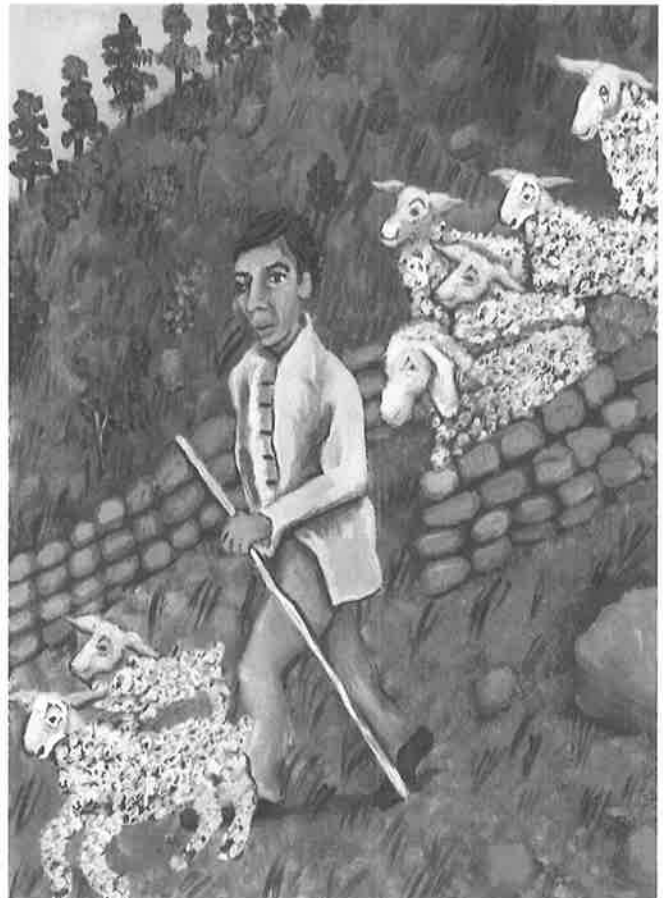
? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How do you think God responds to your requests when you take your prayers to him?
- ❖ Why do you think that free will is so important? Imagine life without it.



ACTION

The parables of the shepherd with the lost sheep and the woman with the lost coin express God's joy at the return of a sinner. Who are you in the story of one of the lost sheep, the woman with the lost coin, or a combination of the two? Using your imagination, write a dialogue as if you were the character with whom you identify (between the shepherd and the sheep or the woman and her inner self or her friends). Look at the challenges you are facing at the end of the story and write a scene resolving your differences virtuously. Then try to implement some of those attitudes and dialogue into your real-life relationships.





September 15, 2019

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #132C

Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14

Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Luke 15:1-32 or 15:1-10

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

The Good News of Jesus Christ is that God desires that all people know and share his love. Those who do not know the love of God and those who have walked away from it are drawn toward the heart of Jesus, who came to restore the bonds between God and humanity. There is great rejoicing at the return of one who has been lost.

Q FOCUS: *We once were lost but now are found.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

We have been reflecting on what it means to follow Jesus Christ with our lives, and have acknowledged that doing so has eternal consequences. Now, we hear the Good News that Christ welcomes and rejoices at the return of the sinner. Point out that St. Matthew, whose feast is this week on September 21, was a tax collector.

Church Teaching Connection

All of us fail at times to live as we know we should. We are all sinners. Therefore, we rely on the mercy and forgiveness of God to welcome our return. Not only is God ready to forgive, he also strengthens us to begin anew each time we return with a contrite heart (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1420-1433).

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 15:1-10

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.

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." So to them he addressed this parable. "What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.

“Or what woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it? And when she does find it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says to them, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.’ In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

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:

At the beginning of today's Gospel passage, tax collectors and sinners were listening to Jesus. It is important to understand that in the Jewish culture of Jesus' time, tax collectors were considered the worst of sinners. They were Jewish men who worked for the Roman government. Often, they padded the tax they charged and kept the amount overcharged for themselves. Eating with a sinner in this culture would have been a sign of acceptance and friendship, so eating with tax collectors and sinners was seen as approving of their behavior.

The tax collectors and sinners were listening to Jesus. Surely, they found hope in Jesus' actions and teaching. Jesus called sinners to repentance and offered forgiveness and mercy rather than the judgment and condemnation they would have experienced from the Jewish religious leaders of the time.

All of us sin. None of us is perfect. It is important for us to acknowledge our sinfulness and to listen to Jesus' call to repentance.

- ▶ What are some typical sins that tempt you?
- ▶ How does Jesus' call to repentance and offer of forgiveness encourage you to acknowledge the ways in which you fail to live as you know you should?

The Pharisees and scribes complain because Jesus allows sinners to be in his company and to learn from him. There are a few things to keep in mind: the Pharisees and scribes believe themselves to be righteous, and therefore worthy of the attention of a rabbi such as Jesus; at the same time, they are concerned that Jesus forgives sins, which only God can do; also, they may be threatened by the following that is developing around Jesus; and, if Jesus allows tax collectors and sinners to listen to him, he must also be a sinner himself! In their minds, nothing good will come from this situation.

Jesus knows how far away their judgment is from his mission, which is to bring people to God. He communicates God's desire for all to know and live within his love through his teaching and actions. The parables that he tells show the extreme nature of God's desire that all are brought into God's loving embrace.

The parables of the shepherd with the lost sheep and the woman with the lost coin express God's joy at the return of a sinner. The shepherd and the woman turn their lives upside down to seek out what was lost. Both leave behind what was not lost, and while we might be able to grasp the woman lighting the lamp and searching her house to find the coin, it is difficult for us to imagine the shepherd who leaves ninety-nine sheep in order to find the one who is lost!

▶ How is Jesus' ministry, passion, death, and Resurrection a fulfillment of his mission to bring people into the love of God?

The Pharisees and scribes consider themselves righteous, and therefore not only right in their judgment of others, but also not in need of forgiveness themselves. Jesus stands in contrast to their unwillingness to admit their own sin and their conviction that sinners are beyond the love and mercy of God.

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 30.

When have you been lost? (Share only what is comfortable.)

In what ways do you know the mercy and forgiveness of God?

How do you offer forgiveness or mercy to others?

Act on the Word

Lost and Found

Ideally, this reflection would lead into a celebration of the Sacrament of Penance. If this is not possible, encourage your group to participate in the sacrament in the coming weeks.

Prepare a reflection sheet with the questions below or provide blank paper for the teens' reflection. Have recordings of quiet music ready and set your room in as comfortable a manner as possible.

Take a few moments to establish a quiet, reflective atmosphere. Invite the teens to gather their thoughts and quiet their minds. Have someone proclaim the Gospel passage again.

Remind the teens that God desires our union with him. Sin is the act of walking away from God and his ways, and while we all sin, we are called to turn away from sin and to turn toward God. Ask the group to reflect on their lives in the quiet of their hearts. Invite the teens to examine the aspects of their lives in which they are tempted to turn away from God through their actions, inaction, attitudes, and disposition. Explain that this reflection will not be shared, and encourage them to be honest with themselves in the examination of conscience that follows.

Jesus told the parable of the lost sheep to illustrate God's joy in the return of a sinner. In order to be ready to receive this joyful return, we must first acknowledge the times in which we are "lost," in which we fail to live as we know we ought, in which we walk away from God and the Christian way of life. Consider your life right now. In what aspects are you lost?

- ▶ Do you spend time with God in prayer?
- ▶ Do you attend Mass every Sunday and Holyday of Obligation?
- ▶ Is your interior attitude focused on gratitude and recognition of God's love, or on acquisition of material things or social status?

▶ What about your life at home? Do you respect your parents and live within the structure established by them?

▶ Consider your relationships with others. Do you bring your faith and commitment to Christ to your actions with friends? Are you chaste? Do you respect your own body and that of others?

▶ Do you reach out to those who are ignored and lonely, or sometimes contribute to the marginalization of peers?

▶ Are you fair, honest, and trustworthy?

▶ Do you give of your time and attention for the sake of others, especially the poor?

▶ Are you selfish or self-centered, or self-giving and generous?

▶ Do you care for and protect the environment?

Give the teens time to reflect. Play quiet music and encourage them to remain prayerfully quiet, even when they have finished.

If this exercise is not immediately followed by the celebration of Reconciliation, encourage the teens to seek out and participate in the sacrament soon, and remind them of the time and place it is available.

Closing Prayer

*Ever-faithful God,
your mercy is beyond our ability to comprehend.
Shape our hearts and our lives according to the
pattern of Jesus.
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.