

Read

Acts 4:32-35

Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15,
22-24

1 John 5:1-6

John 20:19-31

LIVING THE WORD

Second Sunday of Easter / Sunday of Divine Mercy

April 7, 2024



REFLECTION

If you have a sibling, you probably have a unique experience and understanding of sharing. Most siblings share. They are supposed to share. They must share . . . even if they don't want to. As the saying goes, sharing is caring.

In his mercy, Jesus also shares. Through the cross, Jesus shares our suffering. In the resurrection, he shares with us the path to eternal life. Now, Jesus shares his mission: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). These words that he spoke to his disciples he also speaks to us. As adopted daughters and sons of God through our baptism, we are charged with the mighty mission of bringing the Good News to others.

The work of Jesus might seem intimidating. We might even think that it isn't the work for teens. But that's not true; your age and experiences make you uniquely suited to this mission. If you ever feel scared or afraid, Jesus speaks to that, too. Twice in this passage Jesus says, "Peace be with you." He is speaking peace into your situation. He knows the road ahead may be challenging, but his peace and his Spirit are with you.

ACTION

Jesus invites us into his mission of bringing the Good News. As you continue to grow in faith, think about how you can share your faith with others. We often learn best when we are teaching someone else. Reflect on the people in your life who would be blessed by you sharing your faith with them. During your prayer time, say a prayer for each of them. Invite them to church with you or take a risk and share your faith story with them. God has put them in your life for a reason.



Check out Fr. Mike Schmitz's advice for how to evangelize. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OU9zIE2dmWY>

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Who needs to hear the good news today in your life?
- ❖ What unique gifts has God blessed you with that you can use to share the Gospel?



April 7, 2024

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER / SUNDAY OF DIVINE MERCY

LECTIONARY #44B

Acts 4:32-35

Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

1 John 5:1-6

John 20:19-31

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

Today's Gospel tells of Jesus' first appearance to his disciples after the empty tomb was discovered and after he showed himself to Mary Magdalene. Mary told the disciples that she had seen the Lord risen from the dead, yet Jesus finds them behind locked doors because they feared for their lives. Jesus greets them with, "Peace be with you," and reveals his wounds. This is the first time we see the disciples rejoice in the resurrection. The passage ends with Thomas' declaration of Jesus as "My Lord and my God." He had not been present when Jesus first appeared but now believes after seeing the wounds of Christ. Jesus continually offers us his reassuring presence as we journey through our life of discipleship.

Q FOCUS: *Trust in the peace Jesus offers.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

The Second Sunday of Easter is also known as the Sunday of Divine Mercy. It was made part of the calendar of the Church in 2000 by Pope John Paul II after he canonized St. Faustina Kowalska. She was born in 1905 and entered the convent at the age of twenty. She died at thirty-three, but during the last years of her life, Christ visited her in visions and told her about his mercy and his desire for the message of his divine mercy to be spread throughout the world. There are many different devotions associated with Divine Mercy, such as the Divine Mercy image,

chapel, and novena. These aid us in immersing ourselves in God's merciful love. This Sunday reminds us to remain focused on God's great mercy, to be merciful to others, and to trust in God.

Church Teaching Connection

"Thomas, after seeing the Lord's wounds, cried out: 'My Lord and my God!' (v. 28). I would like to reflect on the adjective that Thomas repeats: *my*. . . How can God be *mine*? The truth is, by saying *my*, we do not profane God, but honour his mercy. Because God wished to 'become ours'. As in a love story, we tell him: 'You became man *for me*, you died and rose *for me* and thus you are not only God; you are *my God*, you are *my life*. In you I have found the love that I was looking for, and much more than I could ever have imagined'" (Pope Francis, Homily, April 8, 2018).

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 20:19-31

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.

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had

said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

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:

Even though we are in Easter Time and have already been celebrating the resurrection for a week, our Gospel reading opens with fear. The beginning of the Gospel today takes us back to the same day as

the reading we heard last week, in which Mary discovered the empty tomb. It is now evening and the disciples are hiding in fear.

► Why were the disciples afraid? What had just happened to Jesus?

► What are some things that young people fear?

► What are ways people today respond to fear?

Three times in today's passage Jesus says, "Peace be with you." He knows that we experience many fears in our life. But he wants us to trust in him. He is the only one who can give us lasting peace. He continues to reassure us, time after time, that he is with us and giving us his peace.

Sometimes we need a sign to be reassured of this peace. We also hear about this in today's Gospel. Thomas missed the disciples' first encounter with Jesus. He has often been given the title "doubting Thomas," but if we listened carefully, we know that at the beginning of the reading Jesus showed the other disciples his hands and side. When Thomas hears of this event, he replies by asking to receive what the others had already received—to see Christ.

► What is your take on Thomas? If you were in Thomas' shoes, how do you think you would have reacted? Do you think the title "doubting Thomas" is fair? Why or why not?

Jesus comes back and reveals himself to Thomas. Christ wants to show himself and share the Good News of his resurrection. Upon seeing Christ, Thomas makes a bold declaration of faith, proclaiming that Jesus is his Lord and God.

Jesus continues to reveal himself to us, to reassure us of his presence in our lives. He speaks to us in his Word and through the Church. We encounter him most deeply in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist. When we turn to these things, our fears are calmed and we learn to live in the peace of Christ.

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 168.

Jesus knows that we are afraid sometimes and are uncertain of our faith.

Jesus is always giving us his peace.

We, like Thomas, can declare that Jesus is our Lord and our God.

Act on the Word

Divine Mercy Chaplet

For this activity, you will need enough rosaries and copies of instructions on how to pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy for all the teens to use. A copy of the chaplet can be found here: <https://www.usccb.org/prayers/how-pray-chaplet-divine-mercy>.

(If you have not read the Liturgical Calendar Connection for today, page 168, you can do so at the beginning of this activity to give some background on the Sunday of Divine Mercy and St. Faustina.)

Pass out the rosaries and the copies of how to pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Briefly go over the order of the prayer and how the young people can use the rosary beads to follow along with the prayer. Teens can volunteer to lead a decade, or the whole chaplet can be led by one person. Once everything is set up, pray the chaplet.

Closing Prayer

Risen Lord,
you remake what is broken,
enliven what is dying,
and release all that is held captive.

We depend upon your Spirit
to refashion us and guide us
so that we may at last

enter your kingdom,
where you live and reign
with God, the Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
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.

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