

Read

Isaiah 58:7-10

Psalm 112:4-5, 6-7,
8-9

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Matthew 5:13-16

LIVING THE WORD

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time February 9, 2020



REFLECTION

Over the course of his eleven years as an outreach worker with the homeless, my husband has known 196 people who have died while living on the streets of Denver. Some died violently, others from the effects of addiction, mental illness, or chronic disease. My husband knew them all by name and many of their personal stories. It is heartbreaking that so many have died on our city streets (and there are hundreds more; the 196 are just the people he personally knew). It's also heartbreaking that my husband carries these wounds of grief and loss. He carries that grief, though, because in knowing these abandoned women and men, he bears witness to their dignity. Our friends are amazed that he has been able to stick with this line of work for so long. Yet he has been given an unsentimental spirituality that allows him to deal with dark situations so that he can be a light for others. It's never about him, never "look at how great I am for helping these people" — this is how he's been able to endure for so long. His life is a living witness to Isaiah's instructions and Matthew's Beatitudes, and the simple deeds he does give glory back to God. In today's readings, the Lord calls us to feed the hungry, to shelter the homeless, and to clothe the naked. God's glory and the dignity of all is revealed in these tender actions — this is the deep lesson at the heart of today's readings.



ACTION

How powerful that the poor become a light for the world to see, and more importantly, that they reveal the face of God! The light that breaks forth is like a moment of clarity when we see things as they really are. God, in his glory, is present all the time, but the humblest of people and the simplest of actions pull back the curtain and give the world a glimpse of who God is and where we can find God. Serving others is the "right" thing to do, it makes the world a better place, and it can even make us feel great. But most importantly, we serve others because all of creation is holy, created by God. When we serve others, we serve God. So if you are feeling lost, reach out and be a light for someone else; you just may find that you are not alone. And most of all, your actions will point back to the goodness of God.

*"Light shall rise for you
in the darkness."*



—Isaiah 58:10c

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Many times teens are required to do a service project. Have you ever given thought to the reasons behind this requirement? Why is it good to serve others? How have you been served or shown the light of God to those you have served?



February 9, 2020

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #524

Isaiah 58:7-10

Psalm 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Matthew 5:13-16

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 simple imagery of salt and light pervades Jesus' teaching in today's Gospel. It is an imperative: be salt, be light in your everyday lives. Reinforce this message with the teens.

Q FOCUS: *Be children of the light!*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Valentine's Day is February 14. Point to this day on the liturgical calendar and note to teens that the Church celebrates St. Cyril and St. Methodius on this day.

Church Teaching Connection

"The call of every disciple is to be an authentic Christian witness in the world. We seek to use the gift of faith given us by God to enhance the dignity of all people. In the love we show to others, and by the love of God for the whole human family, people move toward salvation, and the light of Christ shines in the world" (*Ad gentes*, 12).

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

Matthew 5:13-16

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

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

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

Jesus said to his disciples: "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket: it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly father."

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:

Imagine a man coming home from the late shift at work one night, and on the way into the house, he drops his car keys. He can barely see in the weak light, so after trying to look around for a few minutes, he's unable to find them. He is very frustrated and tired so he decides to look the next morning. The next day he comes out to look again, and there in the grass are his lost keys. In the light, he can easily find them.

- ▶ What do you think made all the difference?
- ▶ Has anyone seen a lighthouse? What purpose does it serve?
- ▶ Who depends on lighthouses? Why?
- ▶ Lighthouses guide ships and boats to help them navigate their way safely to port.
- ▶ What if you were like a lighthouse? How would you be a "guiding light" for someone else?

Sometimes people need to look up to someone as an example, to show them how to do the right things. Think about the ways we need light in our lives (and not just so that we can find lost car keys). In the Gospel, Jesus is telling us we must let our "light . . . shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father"

(Matthew 5:16). To be light is to allow our goodness to touch others with the love and goodness of God.

▶ When have you tried to be light for someone else?

Jesus also tells us that we are the "salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13). Salt is a seasoning that makes our food taste better, and is also used to preserve food. If we use too much, salt can ruin a dish; if we use too little the food is bland.

Light is a guide and comfort, and we need it to see. But too much light is blinding, and too little of it causes us to fumble around in the dark. To be salt is to offer our gifts in such a way so as not to overwhelm, but contribute to the good of the community. As Jesus' disciples, we are called to preserve the faith and to "flavor" it. This means that we have so many riches of our Catholic faith to share. Jesus is asking us to recognize the dangers of sin and to guide others safely to the Lord and the Church.

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 132.

What kind of ordinary, necessary actions can we take to make a daily difference in the lives of others?

Act on the Word

Light the World

You will need paper and coloring materials to lead this activity.

Have young people write their names at the top of their sheets of paper and then draw a simple outline of a candle. Instruct them to make it large enough to be able to write inside the flame and the candlestick. Next, ask them to describe one by one, how they will “be a light to the world.” They will write their response inside their candle flame. Now, have them switch papers with a partner. Have them consider how their partner is light to the entire class. Have teens write their response inside the candlestick and then return the papers to the original owners. Spend the rest of the activity having the class decorate their candles.

Remind the class that each of them is increasing the amount of light in the world. No one should hide their light. You may opt to display the class’ work on a bulletin board with a title such as “We Are the Light of the World.”

Closing Prayer

*Loving God,
your holy words, spoken long ago to people
far away,
are spoken to us, here and now.
As we listen, fill our hearts with reverence
and our minds with curiosity.
Bring us back to your Word day after day,
in times of joy and sorrow,
in light and darkness,
for “your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105).
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.