

Sirach 15:15-20

Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5 17-18

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Matthew 5:17-37 or 5:20-22a,
27-28, 33-34a, 37



Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time February 12, 2023



REFLECTION

Did you ever “cross your heart and hope to die” when making a promise? Whether you realized it or not, you were making an oath—a promise that invites either human or divine retribution if the promise is broken. When Jesus tells his disciples not swear on anything in heaven or on earth, he is setting a new standard, one where moral behavior isn’t dependent on the threat of external consequences, but comes from internalized values.

Today’s Gospel is a challenge to each one of us to live with integrity, going beyond the bare minimum required of us by external rules and consequences. Do you have to literally pluck your eye out to keep from objectifying an attractive classmate? Hopefully, you can simply remember to keep your eyes on your classmate’s face and your thoughts on what he or she is saying. We aren’t responsible for the thoughts that come into our heads, but we are responsible for how we respond to them!

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today’s readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Who are you when nobody can see you and there are no immediate consequences for your choices?
- ❖ Do you find it easier to follow a rule when you understand the reasoning behind it? How can understanding a rule or law help you internalize it?



ACTION

It sounds romantic to have someone swear they will change “for you,” but what happens if they are angry with you or convince themselves they can fall into their old ways without you finding out? When we rely on God or other people to “keep us on the straight and narrow,” we’re effectively avoiding responsibility for our decisions. Make a list of the traits of the kind of person you aspire to be. At each decision point this week, try asking yourself, “Is this making me more or less who I want to be?”



“This Is Your Life”—Switchfoot
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sx9Rcl_EueM



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SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #76A

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Matthew 5:17-37 or 5:20-22a,
27-28, 33-34a, 37

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, we hear Jesus teaching his disciples the way to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus uses some of the Ten Commandments and expounds upon these commandments. He explains that it is not only sinful to kill another person, but it is also sinful to be angry with another person. The expansion of the commandments deal directly with one's thoughts, in addition to one's actions. In order to enter into the kingdom of heaven, we must not only act in good and righteous ways, but we must also think in good and righteous ways. We must not lust over another person; we must not be envious of another person's possessions. When we speak, we must utter truths and be fervent in our beliefs.

Q FOCUS: As disciples of Jesus, we are called to follow the path of righteousness.

Liturgical Calendar Connection

While this week includes the celebration of Valentine's Day on February 14, our Church celebrates Sts. Cyril and Methodius on February 14. Cyril (originally called Constantine) and his brother Methodius both were missionaries and teachers. Cyril invented an alphabet that is still used in some Eastern liturgies. The brothers translated various scriptural texts into Slavonic, for the people of the region they served. They were known to use the

vernacular, the language of the people whom they were serving, when preaching and in liturgy. The brothers faced some opposition due to their use of the vernacular but persisted in spreading the faith.

Church Teaching Connection

"When we have spread on earth the fruits of our nature and our enterprise—human dignity, sisterly and brotherly communion, and freedom—according to the command of the Lord and in his Spirit, we will find them once again, cleansed this time from the stain of sin, illuminated and transfigured, when Christ presents to his Father an eternal and universal kingdom 'of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace'" (*Gaudium et spes*, 39).

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 5:20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37

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: "I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

"You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, *You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.* But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

"You have heard that it was said, *You shall not commit adultery*. But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

"Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, *Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow*. But I say to you, do not swear at all. Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one."

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:

God gives Moses the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament. These commandments are the foundation for the way of life that we are called to live. Jesus was raised in the Jewish tradition, and so he was educated about and committed to living the Ten Commandments.

► **What are the Ten Commandments? (Do a quick review to fill in any that were not said when the teens volunteered answers.)**

We know that the Ten Commandments can be divided into commandments that teach us how to love and be in relationship with God and how to love and be in relationship with one another. Jesus expands our understanding of some of the commandments in today's Gospel. For example, he reminds us that, of course, we are not to kill another human being. But he also teaches that we must not harbor anger against another person either. He takes the commandment and adds a deeper meaning to it. In doing so, he instructs his disciples how they will successfully enter the kingdom of heaven.

Living by the commandments is part of the Christian life. In order to follow in Jesus' footsteps, we take each of the commandments to heart, and we try to live according to what they teach us.

► **What might be a commandment that young people struggle with?**

► **What are the difficulties young people face that make living a Christian life challenging?**

Jesus touches on three commandments that can be expanded to incorporate common and normal emotions and feelings: anger, envy, and the desire to lie. As part of the human family, we all have the urge to sin and to allow these emotions to take hold of our hearts. We are in need of forgiveness for these sins, and we are in need of encouragement and support from those around us. Living the Christian life can be difficult and arduous, and frankly, make you unpopular among your peers. It takes courage and a strong belief system to embrace the Ten Commandments and the Christian way that Jesus lays out before us.

► **Who are people in your life that you can turn to for encouragement in living the Christian life? How can you be an encouragement to others to live the Christian life?**

It is possible to gain strength from those around us when we falter. Reach out to a parent, grandparent, friend or mentor to help strengthen you on your path. And, as always, turn to the Holy Spirit to guide you in your daily actions and words.

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 124.

Jesus expands upon the Ten Commandments, requiring more of us as Christians.

We all face struggles in following the Christian way.

We can turn to the Holy Spirit for help, as well as friends, family, and spiritual mentors.

Act on the Word

Exploring the Ten Commandments

For this activity, you will need a list of the Ten Commandments (copies enough for several small groups), magazines and newspapers, and computers or cell phones.

Divide the teens into small groups of three or four students. Distribute a list of the Ten Commandments to each group of students.

Have the groups discuss the different commandments and challenge the young people to think outside the box in terms of each commandment, just as Jesus does in today's Gospel reading. Ask them how else the commandments might be interpreted or expanded. For instance, "You shall not steal," can be expanded to cheating in school or borrowing something from your sibling without asking. Encourage the teens to make them relevant to their own lives.

After the teens have had some time to come up with different ideas, distribute magazines, newspapers, or devices for online research. Ask the teens to find examples of the commandments being broken or being followed. Challenge them to find examples of the "expanded" commandments they already discussed.

When the small groups are finished, have everyone come back together in the large group and share some of their insights.

Closing Prayer

O God of heaven and earth,
you have sent your Son,
the Word made flesh
to teach us your ways
and lead us to eternal life.
Grant us the wisdom to know your law
and the courage to be its witness
to the end of time.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

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.