

Read

Sirach 15:15-20

Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5,
17-18, 33-34

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

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

LIVING THE WORD

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 16, 2020



REFLECTION

Complacency seems commonplace in our world today. We ask questions like, "What is the lowest score I can get on my final exam and still earn an A for the semester?" or "How many practices can I miss before I lose my starting position on the team." It is often easier to simply meet the minimum requirements for something than to risk extra time and effort to exceed expectations. While this is not intrinsically evil, we are called to use our gifts to the best of our ability. Jesus reiterates this point in today's Gospel.

Jesus reminds his followers of the commandments they have heard, such as do not kill, do not commit adultery, and do not bear false witness. In each instance, though, Jesus says that simply meeting the minimum requirements are not enough. Instead, Jesus speaks of the importance of a conversion of mind and heart, as well. It is not enough to simply not kill someone. We must work to eliminate all forms of hatred from our hearts. It is not enough to not commit adultery. We must grow in gratitude instead of jealousy. It is not enough to not lie to others. We must fill our minds with truth instead of hearsay and gossip.

The Kingdom of God is more than a checklist. The Kingdom of God must be a way of life.



ACTION

Make an effort today to reach beyond the expected minimum requirements. Study not only for the upcoming assessment, but to grow in knowledge. Practice your volleyball serve not only to keep your starting position, but to grow in your athleticism. Prepare the difficult line in your music not only to receive the solo, but to grow in your musicianship. What are some other way you can do more than is required for the benefit of yourself and others?

*"I shall spend every
moment loving."*



—St. Bernadette of Lourdes

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Why do you think Jesus is so insistent on conversion of hearts instead of simply avoiding sin?
- ❖ What prevents you from working and living to your fullest potential?



February 16, 2020

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #76A

Sirach 15:15-20

Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

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

A vision for how the followers of Jesus ought to live their lives is presented as a part of the Sermon on the Mount. A distinction is drawn between how the scribes and Pharisees live and how Jesus' disciples should live. As a part of this, teachings on anger, adultery, and oaths are presented.

Q FOCUS: *How ought we to live?*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On February 22, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter the Apostle. You may wonder why the Church honors a chair, but this important feast day actually commemorates St. Peter's response to Jesus to take his seat as the servant leader who will lead the young Christian Church to spread the Good News.

Church Teaching Connection

"Justification is at the same time the *acceptance of God's righteousness* through faith in Jesus Christ. Righteousness . . . here means the rectitude of divine love. With justification, faith, hope, and charity are poured into our hearts, and obedience to the divine will is granted us" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1991).

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:

Wow! We hear some words from Jesus in today's Gospel reading that sound pretty harsh, at least at first hearing. Let us look at the message that Jesus shares with his disciples in today's Gospel and see how it applies to us today.

► **What is your first reaction to hearing what Jesus is telling us in this reading from the Gospel according to Matthew?**

The beginning of the text begins with Jesus imploring his disciples to have righteousness that is greater than the scribes and the Pharisees.

► **Who are these groups of people to whom Jesus is referring?**

The scribes in Jesus' time was a group of men whose main focus in their work was to draft legal documents, copy the Old Testament Scriptures, be scholars of the Old Testament Law, and study those scriptures and to offer interpretations on how they should be applied to daily life. The Pharisees at the time of Jesus' life were a group of Jewish religious leaders comprised mostly of middle-class business men who in many respects operated as a political party. They understood the Scriptures to be divinely inspired, but they also placed quite a bit of emphasis on Jewish oral traditions which found their roots back to the time of Moses. Like the scribes, they too were understood to be legal experts.

► **Why do you think that Jesus begins this passage as saying that one must be more righteous than the scribes and the Pharisees?**

These two groups of people were supposed to be the holy ones in society, but far too often they either did not live up to how they were supposed to live or they missed the point in their interpretation of God's law. So Jesus is essentially saying that his followers are to be even more virtuous than these two groups. The group of followers to whom Jesus is addressing includes us!

► **So how can we accomplish this?**

Jesus lays out a series of teachings for how we can live the type of righteous lives that he is calling us to.

Jesus offers a number of examples of how we ought to live through a series of "You have heard it said . . . but I say to you" statements. In our reading today, Jesus presents three teachings to his followers: a teaching about anger, a teaching about adultery, and a teaching about oaths. Each of these three teachings follows a similar pattern of presentation: first, Jesus presents how each of these teachings has traditionally been offered (the "you have heard" part), and then he moves to a deeper understanding of what that particular teaching truly means for one's life (the "I say to you" part). Let us look at each of these teachings again. (Reread each of the three groupings of teachings.)

► **What are your responses to each of these teachings?**

► **Is there one in particular that seems really difficult for you?**

► **Does one of these seem easier to achieve?**

Ultimately, Jesus is laying out for us an ethic for how we ought to live.

► **How can you apply these teachings to your own lives as teenagers in today's world?**

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 136.

We are called to be righteous in the way that God wants us to be righteous.

A part of our call as Catholic Christians is to be authentic in how we respond to others.

The positive words that we speak should be reinforced by how we act towards others.

Act on the Word

Making Good on Our Vow

For this activity, you will want to revisit the activity entitled "A Renewal of Baptismal Promises" from the Second Sunday of Ordinary Time in this volume of The Living Word™: Sunday Gospel Reflections and Actions for Teens.

Begin this session's activity by calling to mind what was discussed four weeks ago on the Second Sunday of Ordinary time in which the group explored their baptismal promises. Go through each of the questions from the Renewal of Baptismal Promises as is presented in *The Roman Missal*, third edition, and invite the young people to spend a bit of time in quiet reflection pondering each of the questions that is asked of them everytime that they renew their baptismal promises.

Next, draw a connection with the Renewal of Baptismal Promises with today's Gospel reading, focusing in on the end of the reading in which Jesus says, "*Do not make a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow . . . Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No'.*" (Matthew 5:33-37). Talk with the youth about how a vow was made when their parents and godparents made professed their baptismal promises for them on their behalf (if they

were baptized as a young child) or when they themselves made their own initial baptismal promises (if they were baptized at or above the age of reason). Continue the discussion by reflecting upon how everytime they renew these baptismal promises (like on Easter, when they attend and witness someone else being baptized, and ultimately everytime they pray one of the creeds), they are professing their baptismal vow once again.

Guide the discussion so that the group has the opportunity to explore what assenting to these baptismal promises truly means for them as Catholic Christians living in a world in which what they profess to believe can often be under attack or pushed to the side by secular currents in society. How can they better stand up for what it is that they profess to believe so that their "Yes" can truly be a "Yes" and their "No" can truly be a "No."

Closing Prayer

*God of forgiveness,
help us to let go of grudges,
to forgive those who have wronged us,
to seek forgiveness for the wrong we have done,
and so come to your altar in perfect freedom.
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.