

Read

1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9,
12-13, 22-23

Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8,
10, 12-13

1 Corinthians 15:45-49

Luke 6:27-38

LIVING THE WORD

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 20, 2022



REFLECTION

Jesus calls us to return hate with love and to detach from our possessions. The world ought to be a judgement-free zone. Of course it's easy to love the people in our friend groups, those we hang out with and who enjoy our company. But what about the person who annoys me? What about those who have genuinely hurt me or others? This is where Jesus' call becomes more complicated. Being bothered by someone is one thing. Being the victim of hurt is different. Are we really supposed to love that person? If so, what does that love look like so that both parties can be healthy and safe?

This line in today's Gospel can be a bothersome one: "To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well" (Luke 6:29). Really? We can understand not retaliating with more violence, but shouldn't we move out of harm's way? Jesus' message of peace can be challenging—and more complex than meets the eye. Jesus does not want us to get injured. He also does not want us to give up on others, especially those who are difficult. Finding a healthy balance takes prayer and reflection.



ACTION

Apologize to someone you have hurt, whether it was with your fist or with your words. Forgiveness is a central practice of the Christian faith as we strive to build a more loving, united world. The movement toward forgiveness is often aided by a sincere apology. Admitting fault does not make you less of a person. In fact, Jesus argues the opposite: we will be freed to live and love more deeply after sincere repentance.



"Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing."

—1 Peter 3:9

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Who are the "enemies" you could learn to love in a healthy way?
- ❖ Who or what do you need to stop judging?



February 20, 2022

SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #81C

1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23

Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13

1 Corinthians 15:45-49

Luke 6:27-38

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

This Gospel reading is part of a large section of Luke 6 called the "Sermon on the Plain." Included in this sermon are Luke's version of the Beatitudes, as well as many analogies and parables. Jesus offers one of his most challenging imperatives in today's Gospel: to love our enemies. Each element in Jesus' instruction goes against what seems to our natural tendencies; love those who hate you, turn the other cheek, give without expecting or demanding something in return. It is only when we imitate the love of God, shown to us in Jesus Christ, that we are able to live out these challenging calls to discipleship.

Q FOCUS: *Small steps to loving your enemies.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

It is almost the end of this period of Ordinary Time; we only have this Sunday and next Sunday before the next season begins. The next liturgical season is that of Lent. In the coming weeks, spend time considering how you will spend this Lent. Think about the Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving which help to bring us closer to Christ and turn away from sin. The activity that accompanies today's session provides an opportunity for the young people to explore these practices in light of Jesus' challenging call to discipleship in today's Gospel.

Church Teaching Connection

The spiritual and corporal works of mercy are an important part of our faith tradition. They help us to see others through the eyes of Christ and give us a model of Christian charity. They are rooted in sacred Scripture, but we can certainly apply them to our lives today. They include actions such as giving food to the hungry, giving shelter to those who are without a place to live, and visiting those who are sick. They also include spiritual actions such as forgiving those who have wronged us, praying for others, and comforting those who are mourning (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2447).

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 6:27-38

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.

Jesus said to his disciples: "To you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even

sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, and get back the same amount. But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

“Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”

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:

This week, we receive what some consider the most radical call to discipleship in the Bible: we are called to love our enemies. Jesus' words in the Gospel invite us into living counter-culturally, mirroring God's love and mercy for others, especially those who are perhaps the most difficult for us to love.

► Who is easy to love in your daily life? Who do you find the most challenging to love?

► Why is it challenging to love certain people?

St. Thérèse of Lisieux, a French Carmelite nun, is well-known for showing God's love and mercy in her daily life. She struggled with life in her religious community, often feeling unduly criticized and judged by her fellow sisters. Instead of letting this drag her

down into negativity and hostility, she came up with a way of life that inspires people to this day. Thérèse wrote about what she called her “little way” of showing love especially to the sisters she most struggled to love on a daily basis. Some examples of Thérèse's actions include offering a sister a smile, praying for all of her sisters in the community, and doing small acts of service like helping an elderly sister back to her room after dinner.

Thérèse is known as a saint today, but when she started living this “little way” of hers, she did so with the understanding that she could never be perfect in the eyes of God. She could, however, perform little acts of mercy and love for the people in her life.

► How do you show others your love for them? For instance, do you give gifts, offer words of encouragement, spend time together, or offer them a hug?

► What could you do on a daily or weekly basis for others, especially those who are most challenging to show love to (your “enemies”)?

It can be easy to hear this reading and think that Jesus wants his disciples to let others walk all over them. To be clear, this is not the radical call that we should take away from this Gospel. Rather, we are invited to consider how being a disciple of Jesus changes the very way we act, live, and love in the world. Christian love is often referred to as *agape*—universal or self-giving love. We should strive to show this type of love but, like St. Thérèse, know that we and others will never be perfect. Sometimes this means protecting ourselves and honoring our self-worth, rather than continuing to be hurt by others. While God wants us to be loving and merciful, God's word in this reading is not meant to condone instances of abuse.

► What are some suggestions you have for your peers of how to balance this line between showing love to others, but also being aware of your own self-worth and dignity?

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.

We are challenged as Christian disciples to mirror God's love and mercy for others.

We can take small steps to show others love and mercy.

The spiritual and corporal works of mercy are good ways to show others the love of God.

Act on the Word

Lenten Commitments

For this activity, you will need pens and either journals or paper. You may also want to print out or write out the lists of spiritual and corporal works of mercy (you can find these lists online).

Provide some time today for the young people to reflect, individually, on the commitments they would like to make during the upcoming Lenten season. Review the Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. All of these practices lead us to a deeper relationship with God and with our neighbor. How can each person live a Lent full of transformation and love? How might they live the spiritual and corporal works of mercy throughout Lent? Encourage teens to

consider the little ways that they can change their ways of life, like St. Thérèse.

After a period of time, invite the teens to share their Lenten commitments in small groups. Work together in these groups to fine-tune one another's commitments. Finally, display a list of the Lenten commitments in the meeting room or encourage the young people to post them somewhere visible in their homes.

Closing Prayer

*Reconciling God,
you show us your wisdom.
Mold us into your likeness
so that we may be imitators of your love.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity
of the Holy Spirit,
one 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.