

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 24, 2019



REFLECTION

The new order is revealed in today's Gospel and wow is it a newsflash for the early Christians! "Love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great" (Luke 6:35). This statement challenges societal norms in a way that seems impossible. How can you forgive those who harm you or your family? Casting judgement is a common occurrence. If we spent time meditating on this sentence we could save a lot of wasted time worrying over what we cannot control. Brooding over others' shameful acts does not bring mercy to our world. However, prayer and compassionate actions can create ripple effects through family, community, city, nation, and world. In times of great strife, look to your faith leaders, particularly your bishops and pope for words of encouragement on how to live this difficult, yet central, commandment to "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31).

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How do you feel about today's Gospel? Reflect on how this teaching impacts you.
- ❖ Would you consider speaking up against the death penalty? Why or why not?



ACTION

Upholding the life and dignity of the human person, a central theme of Catholic social teaching, can be challenging. Today, consider the death penalty. If Jesus is asking us to love our enemies then how do you do this in a situation where a loved one has been brutally taken from our world? There are many spiritual guides in our Church that help us understand this teaching and challenge us to look beyond the crime. S. Helen Prejean, a tireless advocate for abolishing the death penalty, said in a speech, "Whatever he has done, he is worth more than the worst act of his life, as are we all worth more than the worst act of our lives" (given at Marquette University, October 13, 2009). Today, pray for an "enemy" and for your own journey toward mercy.

With your parents,
watch the film

based on
the life
of S. Helen
Prejean,

**Dead Man
Walking.**





February 24, 2019

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

Today's Gospel has one of Jesus' most famous teachings: love your enemies. The Gospel doesn't stop there, but offers specific suggestions on how to do so: stop judging, be generous, forgive, give. The idea is that we act with love and mercy toward others because that is how God acts toward us. Our response and actions shouldn't be dependent upon how others treat us.

Q FOCUS: *Love your enemies through intentional empathy.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

St. David of Wales is the patron saint of the country of Wales, where he was born in the early sixth century. He was so well-loved and admired that over sixty churches in that country are named after him. Although his feast day, March 1, is not celebrated in the United States, this is an important day throughout Wales. St. David was from a wealthy family, but became a monk known for his preaching and his sparse diet of bread, vegetables, and water. St. David spread the Gospel throughout Wales, founded monasteries, and even became a bishop, but preferred monastery life.

Church Teaching Connection

Jesus asks us not to judge. We can only see part of a person, but God can see into their soul. "How much harm words do when they are motivated by feelings of jealousy and envy! To speak ill of others puts them in a bad light, undermines their reputation and leaves them prey to the whims of gossip." When we stop judging others, we learn how to "accept the good in every person" and to avoid causing him or her more pain by presuming that we know them as well as God does. "But this is still not sufficient to express mercy. Jesus asks us also to *forgive* and to *give*" (*Misericordiae vultus*, 14).

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:

Imagine for a moment that you are walking into a room full of people. You look over to the right, and spot your best friend waving at you.

- ▶ How do you feel (happy, relieved, etc.)?
- ▶ What is your first response (to wave back, go see them, etc.)?

Okay. Before going over to your friend, look over to the left, on the opposite side of the room. There, standing on the edge of the crowd, is your enemy. Maybe enemy is too strong a word; imagine someone who you think is out to get you in some way.

- ▶ How do you feel now (tense, angry, afraid)?

There's a difference in how we respond to friends and enemies (and *frenemies*, those “friends” who sabotage us). Mostly, it's a form of self-protection. If someone has hurt us or someone we are close to, then we either avoid or confront them. Our guard is up, because we don't want to be taken advantage of again. So we draw lines around our friends and we freeze out others. This is a human thing to do, which Jesus acknowledges in today's Gospel. Everyone loves people who love them. But Jesus is calling us to something more.

▶ Why do you think that he tells us to “love our enemies”?

Once people are engaged in an “enemy” pattern (he hates me, or I hate her), usually the pattern escalates into more hate or even violence. Jesus isn't asking us to be a doormat and let people walk all over us. He's asking us to re-create the relationship, to exert ourselves for the good of the other person. Look again at the verbs in the Gospel: love, do good, bless, pray. These are not the actions of a weak person trying not to be seen. These are the actions of someone with inner strength, of someone who is actively trying to respect everyone's dignity.

- ▶ What happens if someone you consider an enemy does something nice for you one day?
- ▶ Do you automatically trust them?
- ▶ What if it happened day after day . . . eventually, doesn't your own hate and mistrust start to thaw?

Many times we justify our attitudes and actions towards others based on their actions. For example, someone ignores you the first few times you try talking to them, so you walk away when they try to start a conversation. But look again at the last verse, where Jesus says the way we measure (or judge, or treat) others is the way God will measure (or judge, or treat) us. Jesus is asking us to choose our behavior and attitude regardless of how others treat us.

And if you think that's difficult, notice that it's not just about our relationships with friends and enemies. Jesus also tells us to lend money when we might not get repaid! We are to be generous and merciful with love and with money. We are to encounter others as people, not as stereotypes or numbers.

► **How in the world are we supposed to do this?**
Any ideas?

Some studies indicate that we can increase our compassion toward others by meditating on what they might be going through, and extending kindness toward them in prayer. This sounds a lot like what Jesus was saying in the first few verses, when he teaches us to “pray for those who mistreat you.” It might be difficult to pray for our enemies. If we’re honest, our prayer might start with: “Jesus, I don’t want to bless those people, but since you’ve asked me to, I’m going to try. Help me love them.” If we’re not at that point yet, it’s okay to ask Jesus to help us be the merciful people God intended us to be.

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 144.

What difficulties do you have in trying to love your enemies?

How does Jesus inspire you to be generous with your attitude toward others?

What do you think when you hear Jesus say that we will be judged in the same way we judge others?

Act on the Word

Creative Prayer for Mercy

You will need paper and pens.

One of the ways we can help ourselves grow in empathy for others is to pray for them in a kind way. Pass out a sheet of paper and pen to each teen. Ask them to write the initials of someone they consider a kind of enemy (initials only!). If they can’t think of a specific person, they can think of a category of people, but again: only write initials. Have them circle the initials. Then, somewhere else on the paper, they should write the word “BLESS” and circle it. Next, they connect the two words with a line. Let them know that you’ll be asking questions, and they are to write their answer anywhere around

those two circles or along the line. (Leave a little time between questions for them to consider, write, or draw their answers.) Think of something this person may be struggling with, and write it down.

Ask: How do you really feel about this person? Draw an emoticon (expressive face) somewhere on the paper. Write Jesus’ name above the emoticon. Offer your feelings, positive or negative, to Jesus. Look again at the initials on your paper. What one good thing do you wish for this person? . . . What would you like your relationship or interactions to be like? What do you wish for your family and friends in terms of safety, health, and happiness?

Write or draw something as a response to these questions. Now draw arrows from the good wishes to the initials in the middle of the page. Think of three other good things you’d like to pray about for this person and write or draw them anywhere on the page. These things could be general, like happiness, health, or love; or you could draw a smiley face or heart. It could also be more specific, like “that his dad stop hitting him” or “that she feel God’s love for her.” Anything that intends good for the “enemy” is a good prayer.

Finally, have the teens brainstorm actions that will help them be more empathetic and love their enemies more. Once a number of ideas has been given, ask the teens to choose one to do during this coming week and to write it down at the bottom of their prayer paper. Let them know you’ll be praying for them during the week.

Closing Prayer

*God of love,
stretch our hearts so that the power of
your merciful love
is evident by how we choose to live our lives.
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.