

Read

Sirach 27:4-7

Psalm 92:2-3, 13-14,
15-16

1 Corinthians 15:54-58

Luke 6:39-45

LIVING THE WORD

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

March 3, 2019



REFLECTION

Most schools provide digital media training for kids and teens these days. With technology in the hands of kids at younger and younger ages, it is super important to know how to navigate these very useful, powerful yet addictive tools. When a group of middle or high schoolers begins this exploration in freedom, it is a bit like the blind leading the blind. Pretty soon, social media posts have been made that cannot be undone. As one grows older, so does the responsibility that comes with knowing how powerful words can be, and the more today's Gospel shines light on our inclination to judge others. Luke reminds us through Jesus' words, "Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own" (Luke 6:41). Judgement paralyzes us from being tolerant or forgiving of another person's differences from us. We would do well to notice the wooden beam in our own worldview before we point out others' faults.

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What is your "beam" that limits your connection with others?
- ❖ Are you too consumed by technology? How might you address this?



ACTION

Schedule a day to do a "Tech Time-Out" this week. Put away your phone or other media devices for twenty-four hours. Do not allow yourself to look at others' devices either. While you are tuned out from social media, reflect on your impulse and desire to connect with the world through technology. Instead, go for a walk with a loved one. Invite someone to play an actual board game. Read a book. If you are someone who constantly uses a device, this could be challenging for you. When we take a step back to reflect on our use (and sometimes our abuse) of technology, we might see clearly how our desire to impulsively be engaged in our social media impacts our perception of the world.





March 3, 2019

EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #84C

Sirach 27:4-7

Psalm 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16

1 Corinthians 15:54-58

Luke 6:39-45

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

Jesus turns to short parables as he continues to teach the disciples on the plain. The disciples hear how their teacher will train them in his ways; how they should not judge another person when sin remains in them; and how trees are known by the fruit they bear. The Gospel reading concludes as we hear Jesus speak what we could consider an obvious tautology: good comes from good and evil from evil. We speak what is in our heart. Let that be goodness!

Q FOCUS: *We are to help others instead of judging them; our goodness is known by our actions.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

This Gospel, with an emphasis on personal examination and good deeds provides the perfect segue into Lent, which begins this Wednesday. Lent, which runs from Ash Wednesday up to (but not including the Mass of the Lord's Supper on) Holy Thursday, is a penitential season during which we prepare ourselves for the coming celebration of the Paschal Mystery during Holy Week, the Triduum, and Easter.

Church Teaching Connections

"Those who are in a position to help others will realize that in doing so they themselves receive help; being able to help others is no merit or achievement of their own. This duty is a grace. The more we do for others, the more we understand and can appropriate the words of Christ: 'We are useless servants' (Luke 17:10). We recognize that we are not acting on the basis of any superiority or greater personal efficiency, but because the Lord has graciously enabled us to do so" (*Deus caritas est*, 35).

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 6:39-45

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 told his disciples a parable, "Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? No disciple is superior to the teacher; but when fully trained, every disciple will be like his teacher. Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,' when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye.

“A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not pick figs from thornbushes, nor do they gather grapes from brambles. A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks.”

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:

- ▶ What if you were trying to take a picture of a tree but there was a toothpick stuck to your camera lens? How much would it block the view?
 - ▶ What if a tree branch suddenly sagged down over the lens? How much would that block the view?
- It's common sense that the bigger the object in the view frame, the larger the obstruction would be.
- ▶ Which family photo would be better: the one with a toothpick blocking someone's shoes, or the one where Dad's face is blocked by a tree?

Usually, we judge the smaller defect as the better one.

Jesus doesn't seem to follow the same logic in today's Gospel. He's telling us to stop complaining about the splinter in someone else's eye, especially since we have a beam in our own. But notice two things. First, he calls both people blind. It's inferred in verse 39 (“Can a blind person guide a blind person?”). We wouldn't say a splinter and a beam are the same thing; yet Jesus seems to imply they have the same result: blindness. As in most of his parables, the physical traits point to spiritual ones as well. Clearly, none of the disciples are walking around with any kind of wood sticking out of their eyes.

▶ What is Jesus really trying to say here?

▶ What do you think “blindness” refer to?

In a spiritual sense, we do tend to judge other people's defects more harshly than our own. Some might say we do so in an attempt to make us feel better about ourselves. In the example we started with, we'd say the photo with the least blocking it would be the better. In the same way, when we see someone we judge as worse than we are, we say, “At least we're not like them.”

Which brings us to the second upside-down thing that Jesus says in today's Gospel. When he instructs his disciples to get rid of the beam in their own eye, it's not so that they win the prettiest eyes contest. It's not so that they can see while others remain blind. Let's look at verse 42: “Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye.”

▶ What? We're to better ourselves . . . so we can help others?

According to Jesus, yes. We have to be aware of our own faults and sins, so that we can remedy them.

▶ And afterward?

It's not about applauding ourselves, bragging, or complaining about other people. It's about helping others remove their own splinters and helping them to remedy their faults and sins. We don't judge, we act for the good of the other.

▶ We may think we're doing this, but how do we really know?

Jesus tells us that we'll be known by what we produce. Not just once or twice, but day after day and season after season. He says a tree is known by its fruit (see verse 44).

▶ Let me ask you something, if you wanted fruit, would you go to a supermarket or a clothes store?

▶ If you wanted to buy a bicycle, would you go to a car dealership?

▶ Can you buy a senior prom dress from BabyGap?

▶ What is your favorite store, and what do you buy there? Will you buy it anywhere else?

Just as trees bear certain fruits, companies are known for certain things. If you're not sure what kind of store it is, you can go inside and look around. The same thing holds for people. Even if they're known for saying a certain thing, see what they do. Be more concerned about what you do.

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 148.

What "splinters" (faults of others) bother you?

What are the "beams" (your faults) you struggle with?

How can what a person does be a reliable indicator of how good they are?

Act on the Word

Blind Beachball Dodgeball

You will need inflated beachball(s), blindfolds for half the teens, and large empty space in which to play.

Divide the teens into two teams. Explain the rules before beginning to play. Players will pair up with someone on their team. One person in each pair will be blindfolded: he or she is the only one allowed to handle the beachball. His or her partner will be able to see, and will be giving directions on where and how to throw the ball, as well as trying to help their blindfolded partner avoid getting hit with a ball! If a blindfolded person gets hit with the beachball, he/she and his/her seeing partner are out of the game. Nothing happens if a seeing person gets hit with a ball. The seeing person is allowed to talk but cannot physically block a ball or touch the blindfolded teammates. The seeing person should stay near their blindfolded partner. The last partners standing without being hit win for their team. Once everyone understands the rules, have the teens pair up with someone on their team, line up

on either side, and pass out the blindfolds. After everyone is ready, start the game. (One variation is to start with more than one beachball, or to introduce a second beachball after the blindfolds are on.) After the game ends, have a short discussion on how people felt being blindfolded or giving directions. Conclude by pointing out that in this game those who could see helped those who couldn't see which is similar to what Jesus was saying in today's Gospel.

Good Fruit, Rotten Fruit

You will need index cards and pens.

Pass out index cards, two for each teen, and a pen. Remind the teens that Jesus said a person is known by their deeds (or actions), just as a tree is known by its fruit. On one card, they should write down one bad or rotten action. On the other card, they are to write down one good deed. After all are written, collect and shuffle them. Pass out two cards to each teen. Take turns reading each one out loud, and have the kids vote on whether it's good or rotten fruit.

Closing Prayer

*Lord Jesus,
who is our master and teacher,
lead us with your sure hand to your kingdom;
remove the impediments to our sight,
that we may see clearly the path of righteousness.
Teach us patience and humility,
that we may examine our own hearts as you would,
with compassion, tenderness, and honesty.
You live and reign 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.