

Read

Acts 6:1-7

Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5,
18-19

1 Peter 2:4-9

John 14:1-12

May 7, 2023

LIVING THE WORD

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 7, 2023



LECTONARY #523
Acts 6:1-7
Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19
1 Peter 2:4-9
John 14:1-12



REFLECTION

We talk about adolescence as a time for discovering who you are and where you belong, but if you pay attention, it's easy to see that many adults are pre-occupied with the same questions. When we are afraid of being rejected or misunderstood, we often feel safest around people who hold the same opinions and want the same things. In our desire to belong, we can wind up hiding or losing those pieces of ourselves that our friends might not understand. It can be truly lonely and troubling to realize that even the people who love and know us best can't understand us the way we long to be understood!

Jesus responds to our troubled hearts by assuring us that God's house has many rooms. There is a place where our longing for love and belonging will be perfectly fulfilled! We need only follow Jesus on the path of love and wholeness in our lives and relationships. This world is a practice ground for love, and the closer we can come to the love of Christ, the more surely we will follow him to our heavenly home.



ACTION

Our hearts are frequently troubled by the brokenness we see in our families and in the communities around us. Jesus promises to free us from the sins and burdens that hold us back from loving God and each other. Think of one conflict in your family or community. How can you create opportunities for understanding and healing? Ask Jesus to show you how to follow his way to truth and new life in this situation.

"If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."

—Mother Teresa



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How has the desire for belonging influenced your choices?
- ❖ How does sin prevent us from finding perfect belonging or community in this life?



May 7, 2023

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LECTIONARY #52A

Acts 6:1-7

Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19

1 Peter 2:4-9

John 14:1-12

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 calms the disciples' worries in the beginning of this passage. Even though this passage takes place before the crucifixion during the Last Supper, his words must have offered some comfort to them as they huddled together in fear after his death. Jesus also helps them understand more clearly the connection between himself and God. Seeing Jesus is the same as seeing the face of God. The disciples are continuing to learn and grow in their faith and discipleship of Jesus through passages like this. We also learn about our life of discipleship and how to follow Jesus as the way to the Father.

Q FOCUS: *Trust in Jesus and follow him.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On May 13 we celebrate Our Lady of Fatima. Mary appeared to three shepherd children near Fatima, Portugal. She appeared six times between May 13 and October 13, 1917. When Mary appeared to the children, she asked them to pray for peace and an end to war, by praying the rosary. Of course, Europe was in the throes of World War I in 1917, and so praying for peace and an end to war was extremely important at that time. Yet that same message of continued prayers for peace can still apply amidst the turmoil of the world today.

Church Teaching Connection

"It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will (see Eph 1:9), which was that people can draw near to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature (see Eph 2:18; 2 Pet 1:4). . . . The most intimate truth thus revealed about God and human salvation shines forth for us in Christ, who is himself both the mediator and the sum total of revelation" (*Dei Verbum*, 2).

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

John 14:1-12

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where I am going you know the way." Thomas said to him, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you

know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said to him, “Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father.”

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:

Today's Gospel reading comes from teachings that Jesus offers his disciples during the Last Supper. Though he has not been crucified and raised yet, these words surely comforted them as they went through that experience. Think about all they had been through during Jesus' crucifixion. Consider how a few weeks ago, we read about them being locked in the upper room, fearing for their lives. They feared for their lives because they were followers of Jesus, and they are concerned that the authorities will come after them as well and persecute them. In those times of fear, how comforting it would have been for them to recall these words of Jesus.

► Has a Scripture verse or story offered you comfort in a time of fear, worry, or sorrow? Have you ever offered words from Scripture to a friend who might need Christ's reassurance?

Jesus' message of consolation is one that we also need to hear at times. We might be experiencing difficulties and struggles in our relationships with our parents, siblings, or friends. We might be worried and stressed with school and expectations placed on us. Whatever might be troubling your hearts today, Jesus speaks to you as well. Don't let the peace of your hearts be disturbed and know that your faith can be a comfort during difficult times.

This comfort is not just mere words. Jesus clearly states that he “is the way and the truth and the life.” Faith in Jesus, following Jesus' ways, is the way to God. Philip presses the question further, wondering how it is that they have seen God. Jesus connects the dots for him, and for us. If they believe in Jesus, they believe in God. If you see Jesus, then you will see the face of God. If they wonder who God is, if they want to catch a glimpse of God, they look no further than Jesus. Jesus is the Word of God, and Jesus' actions are God's actions in the world. While it is difficult for the disciples to grasp this truth, it is a necessary lesson that Jesus shares with them. It is in this lesson and this teaching that he helps to put their hearts further at ease.

► What are some ways that your actions reflect the fact that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life?

The early Christian communities built by the disciples demonstrate their continued faith in Jesus as the way. By spreading the faith to all people, they helped others to find that path and walk along it. Jesus offers his words of wisdom as a way to strengthen the disciples for their future mission, when he is no longer with them. He offers the same to us.

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 176.

Jesus begins this encounter with the disciples by offering words of calm.

Sometimes, we too need to hear Jesus' message to not let our hearts be troubled.

Jesus clearly states that he is the way, the truth and the life. These are important words for the disciples then and for us now

Act on the Word

Jesus Is the Way

For this activity, you will need an outdoor space to walk and explore. If there are statues on the church property, a garden, outdoor stations of the cross, or a labyrinth, that is also helpful. You will also need to create scavenger hunt clues for small groups to find these locations and faith-based activities to do at each.

In this activity, the teens will engage in a faith-filled scavenger hunt to help them follow Jesus, as the way, more closely.

Divide the young people into small groups. Give each group about five or six clues for a scavenger hunt; send them to different locations outdoors, statues, and so on. At each location/station, the teens will need to complete a faith activity. For instance, when they arrive at a statue of Mary, they should pray a "Hail Mary." If they arrive at a statue of the patron saint of the parish, they could take a photo with the statue, or something similar and pray a short, "St. [name], pray for us. All holy men and women, pray for us." Stress the importance of being serious and reverent when taking photos, saying prayers,

singing hymns, or whatever else the faith action might be. The final stop on the scavenger hunt should be a statue of Jesus, or a cross or crucifix on the church property. If there is not one readily accessible, have one in the room. Instruct the teens to pray the "Our Father." When they finish the scavenger hunt, invite them to sit down by the last location. Invite them to share their experiences of the scavenger hunt. Did they learn anything new about the church property? Something that they had not noticed before? Share with them that the purpose of the scavenger hunt is to illuminate that we are all on a journey as Christians. Along this journey, we need to keep praying and looking for signs of Christ's presence in the world because he is our way to eternal life.

Closing Prayer

Risen Lord,
you are the way that leads us to the Father,
the truth that reveals the Father,
the life that is one with the Father.

Through the gift of your Holy Spirit,
take us to yourself
so that we may always be in your presence.

You live and reign with God the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
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.