

Read

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

Psalm 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7,
16, 20

1 Peter 3:15-18

John 14:15-21



REFLECTION

Every friend we have started out as a stranger to us. We don't start out knowing everything about each other. Maybe you notice someone's sense of humor or kindness. You start to spend more time together and listen to each other. If your mutual admiration turns into friendship and your friend acts loyal and trustworthy, you'll start opening up and sharing more of yourself. The more a friendship is based on love, respect, and understanding, the deeper and more enduring it is.

Christ promises us a deeper level of communion than any earthly friendship. If we love him, we will enter into the love between God the Father and God the Son. St. Thomas Aquinas talks about this dynamic love between Father and Son in his *Summa Theologiae*. He says that the overflowing divine love between the Father and the Son is actually the third Person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit—the love of God at work in our hearts (*Summa Theologiae*, part 1, question 37, article 1)! This is good news: Divine love is our origin, our guide, and our destination!

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Do you think it is possible to really understand someone without loving them?
- ❖ Can love sometimes change you for worse rather than better? How can you love someone who is broken without becoming broken yourself?

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 14, 2023

ACTION

Jesus stresses that love is demonstrated by our actions. We cannot love someone and remain unchanged. When we love someone, we listen to them and we have faith in them. We learn to see the world from another point of view and that changes us. Think about the people you love. How do they inspire you to be a better version of yourself? Spend time this week with a family member or friend whose love has changed you. What does your love for them look like in action?



"You've Got a Friend in Me"
(from Toy Story)

—Randy Newman

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hG-2tQtdIE>



May 14, 2023

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LECTIONARY #55A

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

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John 14:15-21

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 continues to prepare the disciples for his imminent departure from them, both at death and then at his ascension. First, he emphasizes that the disciples show their love for him by following his commandments. Love of God and love of neighbor are the two most important commandments, and Jesus wants assurances that his disciples will continue to follow these commandments, even after he has ascended to heaven. In order to help them with that, Jesus promises to send an Advocate, the Holy Spirit. Jesus also makes it clear that though he is leaving earth to be with God, he lives on in the disciples. Help the young people take this message to heart, that Christ is with them and the Spirit is guiding them in every moment of their day.

Q FOCUS: *Jesus will send the Holy Spirit to the disciples to strengthen them in their faith.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

The next major liturgical celebration is the solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord. The date of the Ascension is forty days after Easter, making Thursday (May 18) the official date for this year. However, the majority of dioceses across the US will celebrate this on the Seventh Sunday of Easter (next Sunday). One of the reasons for the different day of commemorating this solemnity is so that more

people can experience this celebration (on a Sunday, as opposed to a Thursday during the work week). Be sure to check your local parish calendar.

Church Teaching Connection

"Dear brothers and sisters, we have this Advocate; let us not be afraid to turn to him to ask forgiveness, to ask for a blessing, to ask for mercy! He always pardons us, he is our Advocate: he always defends us! Don't forget this! The Ascension of Jesus into heaven acquaints us with this deeply consoling reality on our journey: in Christ, true God and true man, our humanity was taken to God. Christ opened the path to us." (Pope Francis, General Audience, April 17, 2013).

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 14:15-21

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: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows him. But you know him, because he remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer

see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.”

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 continue to hear from Jesus' teaching at the Last Supper. Again, though, they are quite appropriate to hear in this season of resurrection. We know that Jesus will not remain with the disciples, even after his resurrection. His message we hear today is to remind them to continue to keep the commandments, to love God and to love their neighbor.

► **Have you ever forgotten something very important? Why did you forget—was there an event that turned everything upside down? Were you thinking about other, seemingly more important things?**

► **What made you remember what you had forgotten?**

Jesus does not want the disciples to lose sight of the most important tenets of the faith which he has taught them through his words and actions. They are about to go through a very traumatic experience, witnessing Jesus' trial and crucifixion. In the midst of all of that, it would be easy to forget or lose sight of Jesus' message. The same could be applied to the time when Jesus will ascend to the Father and leave the disciples. Though that is not a traumatic event like the crucifixion was, it was still a change in circumstance for the disciples.

We can relate to the experience of forgetting a lesson a month or two after we have taken a test. Other things capture our attention and we categorize the information as “not needed” anymore. If we play a sport or an instrument, we can sometimes get into a lull and not practice as regularly. In a way, Jesus begins this discourse with a reminder to the disciples to stay vigilant and continue to follow the way, even if Jesus is not there to guide them and help them. Christ's commands are the “basics”—like in sports or music there is a certain set of foundational skills you need to keep practicing because they prepare you for the more advanced challenges to come.

Jesus assures the disciples that he will not leave them “orphans.” He will not leave them alone in this task of keeping his commandments and practicing them on a daily basis. Jesus is priming the disciples for the experience of Pentecost, which is just a short time away in our current liturgical year. Jesus promises to send the disciples an “Advocate,” the Holy Spirit. We believe in a triune God, three persons, one God. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity.

► **What does it mean to be an advocate?**

An advocate supports, defends, and promotes the interests of a cause or a group. The Holy Spirit serves as a source of support to the disciples and also to us. For those of us who have been confirmed, or are preparing for the sacrament of confirmation, we know that we are strengthened by the gifts of the Holy Spirit at this sacrament. We have already received the gift of the Spirit in baptism, but in confirmation, the Holy Spirit comes to us in a particular way to strengthen us to continue in our Christian life. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, knowledge, understanding, fortitude (courage), counsel (right judgment), fear of the Lord (wonder and awe), and piety (reverence). These gifts of the Spirit are important in our tradition because they help us to live the Christian life. It can be difficult, and we need the support of the Holy Spirit, just as the disciples did all those years ago.

► **Which gift do you think is most important for young people to receive? How can it help you and your peers with the challenges you face?**

Even though Jesus will be leaving the disciples, he also promises them that he will live on in them. We need to hear this message as well. Sometimes, we feel far from Jesus or from God, and Jesus reminds us that he lives within us. We are Christ's body here on earth; we are called to be Christ's hands, feet, eyes, and ears here on earth. That means that in all that we do, the way in which we act toward others, we are Christ's emissaries; we bring the love and compassion of Christ to those around 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 180.

Jesus is preparing his disciples for his upcoming departure from them.

Jesus promises to send an Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to the disciples.

Jesus will be physically gone from the disciples, but he lives on in each of them and in each of us.

Act on the Word

Gifts of the Spirit

For this activity, you will need pens/pencils and a chart/table listing the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, definitions for each gift, and blank space for the students to use for reflection.

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit can be somewhat nebulous and difficult to comprehend as a concept. Sometimes, it is easier for the teens to grasp the concept of the seven gifts when they contemplate people in their lives or in the wider community/world who embody one of the gifts. Connecting each gift to a person helps to outline what the gift looks like in practice so they can put it into practice in their own lives.

Give each person a piece of paper with the chart on it. The seven gifts should each have their own row. Under each gift, include a definition of the gift for the teens to read. You can find definitions online.

Begin the activity by inviting the young people to read through the definitions of the gifts. After they read through them once, then the leader can guide them through the activity. The leader will read each gift and definition, one at a time. You might want to have your own examples of people who embody a particular gift to help the teens think about people in their lives and in the wider community. Invite them to think of a person or people who embody wisdom, understanding, knowledge, etc. The teens should write the person's name in the column next to the gift and definition. They can also add some additional information, such as what it is about the person that demonstrates that particular gift.

If time allows, invite the young people to share one or two of the people on their list and why they embody those gifts. Allow the teens to guide the discussion.

Closing Prayer

*In your great love, O God,
you gathered the people of the world
as a parent embraces a child with
loving kindness.*

*Grant to us, your children,
an ever deeper fidelity to your commands
that we might live with a spirit of
reverence for all the brothers and
sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you,
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.