

Read

Acts of the Apostles

8:5-8, 14-17

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

1 Peter 3:15-18

John 14:15-21

LIVING THE WORD

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 17, 2020



REFLECTION

When Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" one might think Jesus is giving the disciples some sort of ultimatum (John 14:15). If you love me, you will keep my commands. We must remember, however, that Jesus does not force us to do anything. Rather, Jesus continually offers an invitation to follow him. With this, Jesus' words sound much more like a simple statement of fact. The disciples will keep Jesus' commandments because of their love for Jesus. Similarly, we will keep the commands of Jesus because we love Jesus. There is no force or threat behind these words. That is not how God operates.

The love that Jesus describes is much more than an emotion. In Jesus, love requires self-gift. When we are called to love, we are called to offer ourselves. This love requires personal investment and sacrifice, things that are not always easy. We become vulnerable when we give of ourselves. We open our hearts to criticism and condemnation. Sometimes we experience disappointment and hurt. But this is part of being disciples of the Risen Christ. This is how we participate in Christ's life, death and Resurrection. This is how we live the Paschal Mystery.



ACTION

Part of self-giving love is saying yes even when we would rather not. We are called to say yes dozens of times each day. How do we respond? What are some of the things God invites you to say yes to today? These yeses are not necessarily complicated, and can be as simple as spending time with a friend or helping a younger student with her homework. What can you say yes to today? Be courageous and grow in Christ with each yes you proclaim.

*"Totally love him,
who gave himself totally
for your love."*



—St. Clare of Assisi

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What, if anything, scares you about self-giving love? Why?
- ❖ When have you been the recipient of self-giving love?



May 17, 2020

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LECTIONARY #55A

Acts of the Apostles 8:5-8, 14-17

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

1 Peter 3:15-18

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

We continue to hear from John's account of the Gospel in this sixth week of Easter. Continuing his remarks to his disciples at the Passover feast, Jesus promises God will send an Advocate (the Holy Spirit). This passage invites us to consider Christ's view of love, especially in its connection to keeping the commandments.

Q FOCUS: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Display the liturgical calendar and point out the sixth week of Easter. A few dioceses in the United States maintain the traditional celebration of the Ascension on Thursday of this week. Although it is a Holyday of Obligation, in most dioceses it is transferred to Sunday because our bishops recognize that it is often difficult for those who work and attend school to participate in Holydays of Obligation. The Ascension is so important to understanding Easter and our call to discipleship that it is transferred to Sunday so that more people can participate.

Church Teaching Connection

In his *Spiritual Exercises*, St. Ignatius of Loyola writes, "Love is shown more by deeds than by words." This Christian love that we live, often called *agape*, is more than a feeling: it is embodied. The Gospel clearly calls us to act upon our love, particularly by loving the stranger and the outcast.

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:

As we celebrate Easter Time, we are moving ever closer to the celebration of Jesus' Ascension—and with that, his departure from earth. It is fitting, then, that we hear Jesus' preparations for when he is no longer here with his disciples. The focus this week is on love—Jesus' love for his disciples, as well as their love for their teacher. This reading begins with Jesus explicitly stating, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Imagine a parent or a good friend saying, “If you love me, do what I ask of you.”

► **Why do you think we hear this reading in the midst of Easter Time, when we are celebrating the resurrected Christ?**

One reason is to remind ourselves of the love that Christ had in his passion and death. It is also important to reflect on Jesus' wishes for his disciples beyond his time with them. In the passage we heard today, Jesus clearly lays out how he measures their love for him.

► **How does following someone's rules or wishes show your love for them? If you disobey your parents, are you saying that you don't love them?**

► **Do you think this is a good way to show love for someone?**

Often, a parent or guardian sets rules because they love you and they want you to be safe and healthy. Furthermore, however, someone that truly loves you wants you to be the best possible version of

yourself. This is what Jesus desires for his disciples! The best way for the disciples to show their love for Jesus is to honor the commandments that were made out of love for them. This carries over to our relationships with our parents, guardians, other relatives, and friends. We can hurt the people who love us most by ignoring a simple rule that was set out of love for us. The relationship between the one who sets rules and the one who follows them is one of mutual love.

► **Can you recall a time when you broke someone's rules or expectations? What did this do to your relationship? How did you feel afterward?**

Jesus makes some heavy promises; in this passage from John, we hear him promise, “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18). Imagine the disciples hearing these words. What a mysterious thing to say!

► **How were they to understand his words?**

Jesus also details that, if the disciples love him and keep his commands, God the Father will send an Advocate to be with them. This is one of the few explicit references to the Holy Spirit, and a sneak peek to the eventual coming of the Spirit that we hear about in Acts of the Apostles. The Spirit is to be a companion that remains with the disciples to drive their work. Jesus foreshadows that, although he will not be physically present with his disciples in the exact way that he is now, he will nonetheless accompany them. Jesus' love is so vast and deep that he craves our health and success, and blesses us with a powerful Spirit who breathes into us gifts from God!

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 192.

How do you experience love from others?

How do you experience God's love?

What is the best way to show your love for God and for others?

How can you find joy in keeping difficult promises?

Act on the Word

Keep Which Commands?

For this activity, youth will need bibles. Group the teens into teams of about three to five participants.

Ask the teens: Which commandments do you think Jesus was referring to when he says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments?" (John 14:15). Instruct each team to work together and comb through their knowledge of Jesus' commands or teachings in the Bible. Ask each group to construct a case for which commandments they think are the most important to keep, in order to show our love for God! Their cases should include:

- ✧ Citation of a specific Scripture story (chapter and verse).
- ✧ A brief summary of what Jesus teaches or instructs in the story.
- ✧ An outline of how the disciples or others gathered reacted to the teaching.
- ✧ At least three reasons why these are the commandments that will show our love for God.

If desired, you can set this up in the form of a debate or a courtroom. May the best case win!

Closing Prayer

*Lord God,
you declared us to be "very good"
and sent your Son to share in our humanity.
May we also seek you in prayer and worship,
in your Word and sacraments,
in wisdom and service.
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 the Holyday of Obligation

To help teens prepare for the Ascension of the Lord, 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.