

Read

Acts 1:12-14

Psalm 27:1, 4, 7-8

1 Peter 4:13-16

John 17:1-11a

Seventh Sunday of Easter

May 21, 2023

REFLECTION

This week's Gospel reading takes us back before Christ's passion and death, to John's account of Jesus' prayer after the Last Supper. Although Jesus is facing his death, he is already looking toward his resurrection and glory with confidence. Surrounded by his friends, looking back at his ministry and forward to his final destination, Jesus seems to be looking at a bigger picture in which the suffering that awaits him is less important than the magnitude of his mission.

What is the vision that grants so much courage? Jesus affirms that his life is a success, by his terms. He was sent to bring glory to God, so that his followers might know the Father and have eternal life. He has completed the work he was given and seeks to return to glory with the Father.


Jesus didn't need to pray this prayer out loud or in the presence of his apostles, so we can assume his words are meant as much for our encouragement as for his own comfort. Here, as his death loomed, Jesus makes it clear that the eternal life he came to offer is the life that flows from drawing close to God. Heaven isn't a place we go to; it is a state of being that we share in more and more as we know and love the Father through Jesus.

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How might being aware of your mortality help you live more like Christ?
- ❖ What are you grateful for in your life? In what situations has God blessed you?

ACTION

If you didn't have long to live, what would your parting words be? Write a draft of a "final prayer" that talks to God about your past and present and looks forward toward life in heaven with him.

 "Live Like You Were Dying"
 —Tim McGraw
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wzruh76X5a0>



May 21, 2023

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LECTIONARY #59A

Acts 1:12-14

Psalm 27:1, 4, 7-8

1 Peter 4:13-16

John 17:1-11a

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

In this Gospel passage, Jesus is speaking directly to the Father, relaying all that he has accomplished while on earth. Jesus is making it clear that he has done what he was sent to do, that he has glorified God's name and has brought many followers and believers into the fold. Jesus has continued to teach and comfort the disciples, knowing that they needed some further encouragement and guidance once he has died, been raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven. They remain on earth, taking up Christ's mission and sharing his teachings with all.

Q FOCUS: *Jesus is ready to return to the Father, but does not leave us on our own.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week, we celebrate the memorial of St. Philip Neri on May 26. St. Philip Neri lived during the sixteenth century. He began his life of ministry as a layperson dedicated to prayer, theological discussion, and care for the poor. He eventually was ordained as a priest. He drew others to his way of life, and the priests lived in community at the Oratory. We also celebrate St. Augustine of Canterbury this week, on May 27. He is called the "Apostle of England" because he traveled to England to evangelize the Anglo-Saxons in the late sixth century. He was successful in his missionary endeavor and worked to help new Christians understand the differences between pagan rituals and Christian practice and belief.

Church Teaching Connection

"What exactly is the Lord asking for? First, he prays for his disciples, present and future. He peers into the distance of future history. . . . He prays to the Father for the Church and for her unity. It has been said that in the Gospel of John the Church is not present—and it is true that word *ekklesia* is not used by John—and yet she appears here in her essential features: as the community of disciples who through the apostolic preaching believe in Jesus Christ and thus become one. . . . This prayer, then, is properly speaking an act which founds the Church" (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, April 1, 2010).

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 17:1-11a

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 raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your son, so that your son may glorify you, just as you gave him authority over all people, so that your son may give eternal life to all you gave him. Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ. I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do. Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began.

"I revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you gave me is from you, because the words you gave to me I have given to them, and they accepted them and truly understood that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for the ones you have given me, because they are yours, and everything of mine is yours and everything of yours is mine, and I have been glorified in them. And now I will no longer be in the world, but they are in the world, while I am coming 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:

► Have you ever heard a graduation speech or a retirement speech? What was included in the speech?

In many ways, what we hear today is Jesus' farewell speech, though it is in the form of a prayer to the Father. He has accomplished all that he was sent to do. He has glorified God, he has performed miracles that point to the majesty of God, and he gathered people to be his followers. It appears that his many tasks on earth have been completed, and he is ready for all that will follow with his death, resurrection, and ascension. He is ready to be reunited with God in heaven because his work is complete.

Jesus uses an important word in this discourse. He speaks of how he came to "reveal" the name of God to the world. The Catholic Church emphasizes the notion of revelation, that the nature of God is revealed to us through Scripture, both Old Testament and New Testament. And, of course, that Jesus is also the revelation of God, the Word made flesh and God as man living among us. Jesus is recounting all of the connections, all of the overlap—you gave to me, and I give to you, and so on. It is clear that God sent Jesus for a specific mission, and that mission is now completed, and so it is time for them to be reunited.

► There is a lot "connecting the dots" between human beings, Jesus, and the Father in this reading. What images of the relationship between all of them come to mind? How would you describe it?

Jesus' leaving has an impact on the disciples. This prayer helps to lay a foundation for the vision of the early Church. There is a focus on unity among the disciples and a focus on the missionary spirit of the Church. This knowledge of Jesus and belief in him is not supposed to be kept secret. The disciples are charged with spreading the Good News and all that they have learned about God because they are the ones that remain on earth.

Jesus' leaving has an impact on us. We must not forget that Jesus is still present with us; he lives in our hearts and we are his emissaries to the world. We bring the love and compassion that he embodied to all we encounter.

► Do you feel as though you can pick up where the disciples left off? How do you know that God is still at work in our world even though Christ is with the Father?

It is important to remember that Jesus was emphasizing that though he had to leave the disciples, his spirit still lived on in his disciples, and it also lives on in each one of 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 188.

Jesus has accomplished all that he was sent to do, and he is ready to return to the Father.

Jesus' followers will remain and are now charged with spreading the Gospel to others.

We too remain on earth, and are called to take up the mission of the disciples in our time.

Act on the Word

Explore the Early Church

For this activity, you will need several Bibles, passages for students to research (such as passages in Acts of the Apostles and letters of St. Paul to different communities) and access to internet.

Because today's passage from John's Gospel is considered a blueprint for the early Church, this activity will engage the teens in researching some of the early Christian communities. Before you begin this activity, you might want to research some early Christian communities online or in a Catholic study Bible, to help aid the teens with this activity. The Acts of the Apostles has some very basic information about how the first Christians worshipped and celebrated the Lord's Supper together. The letters of St. Paul to the early Christian communities also illuminate some different ways that early groups lived in community, shared things in common, and tried to retain their Christian faith in an unbelieving world. Note several passages that would be good for the teens to use in research and discussion.

Divide the teens into small groups. Give each group a Bible and at least two passages to locate in the Bible. Invite them to read the passage aloud in their small groups and discuss what it teaches them about the early Christian communities. After reading the passages, invite the groups to do some research online regarding early Christian communities. They might find information about the desert fathers, monastic communities, and the domestic church, among other groups. Together with all the young people, consider similarities between the early Christian communities and how we live and worship in modern times. For instance, so much of our modern society centers around individualism. In ancient times, a community-oriented approach to life was more common.

Closing Prayer

*Lord Jesus Christ,
you have ascended in glory
and are at the right hand of the Father,
yet you remain here among us and
within us.*

*By the grace of the Holy Spirit,
empower us to be your faithful witnesses,
for 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.