

Read

1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21

Psalm 16:1-2a, 5, 7-8,
9-10, 11

Galatians 5:1, 13-18

Luke 9:51-62

LIVING THE WORD

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 26, 2022



REFLECTION

To look back or not to look back? In Sunday's Gospel, Jesus chastises the disciples who respond to his summons to "follow me" with: I will, but. . . . The responses vary, but they want to go back and wrap things up at home. These disciples want to bury a dead father and say farewell to family. They want to hold on to the familiar for a little while longer. Maybe they don't realize the transformative power of Jesus' call forward: follow me. Perhaps Jesus sees the disciples so attached to their relationships that they are not free to fully answer his call. Jesus issues a life-altering call for the present and future. It will take a total yes of mind, body, and spirit to answer this call.

Jesus has no time for halfway. Linger in the past, dwelling over what was, takes up valuable energy that could be used for engaging the new calls of today. People are in need now. Your gifts can be of service today. How will you respond?



ACTION

What is one way you can be more "impulsive" in following Christ this week? It's unlikely that any of us are going to run away from home, with absolutely nothing, in order to follow Christ. But there are ways we can say yes to Christ's calling in new and unexpected ways. Linger in church after Mass to greet a person who came alone. Cook a meal for a neighbor going through a difficult time. Say hello to the new person at school.



"I Will Follow" —Chris Tomlin

[https://www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ohvhmGSfxl)

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QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What is one way you know you can follow Jesus this week?
- ❖ What is one way you could stretch yourself to follow Jesus this week?



June 26, 2022

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #99C

1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21

Psalms 16:1-2a, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11

Galatians 5:1, 13-18

Luke 9:51-62

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

This Sunday's Gospel reading can be challenging and seems contradictory at points. First you have James and John wanting to bring destruction down on a Samaritan town just for being inhospitable. Although hospitality was an important courtesy in that day and age, James and John's reaction seems to be a bit of an overreaction, and Jesus' rebuke against them suggests the same. Then you have Jesus greeting prospective disciples with several challenging conditions, such as leaving behind their families or their responsibilities to bury their dead. A clear takeaway from this week is that the path of discipleship requires sacrifices from us. We have to be willing to relinquish our control and trust in God in order to follow Jesus' path.

Q FOCUS: We must learn to let go of control in our faith lives; God is in control.

Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week, we celebrate Sts. Peter and Paul (June 29). It seems appropriate that their feast falls during this week, as both those saints exemplify today's message about leaving behind our lives and trusting God. The two men could not have had more different backgrounds. Peter was a relatively uneducated fisherman, and yet he was one of Jesus' most dedicated followers. Paul, on the other hand, was very well educated, but spent a long time persecuting the early Christians until he experienced a miraculous conversion. Despite their differences, both men believed and

trusted in the Lord, and that trust led them to become some of the earliest leaders in the Church.

Church Teaching Connection

Within our faith, much of our Church teaching encourages us to avoid attachment to material goods. And yet our faith also suggests that emotional attachment, even to other people or to ideas, can also interfere with our relationship with God. We are encouraged to become free of attachment so that we can focus on God. The Second Vatican Council noted that "[a]ll who in obedience to Christ seek first the kingdom of God will derive from it a stronger and purer motivation for helping all their brothers and sisters and for accomplishing the task of justice under the inspiration of charity" (*Gaudium et spes*, 72).

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 9:51-62

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.

When the days for Jesus' being taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem, and he sent messengers ahead of him. On the way they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his reception there, but they would not welcome him because the destination of his journey was Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw

this they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they journeyed to another village.

As they were proceeding on their journey someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head."

And to another he said, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, let me go first and bury my father." But he answered him, "Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." And another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home." To him Jesus said, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."

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 Sunday's Gospel is a challenging reading to follow. Both Jesus and the disciples seem to be a little harsh in their treatment of others. The first encounter of this is when they are not welcomed into a Samaritan village, and James and John want to retaliate by calling down fire upon the village. First of all, this is the first time in any Gospel where we hear about the disciples being able to do that. It's possible that's because it represents a bit of an overreaction. Jesus rebukes them, because he knows that not everyone will always welcome him or his message. There are other times in the Gospel accounts where he shows that he will not force anybody to follow him.

► **Why do you think it is an important part of our faith in God that we not be forced into believing?**

► **How does this relate to loving God and receiving God's love in your life?**

This exchange is immediately followed by Jesus displaying a harsh attitude. A would-be disciple tells Jesus that he will follow him anywhere. Jesus responds somewhat oddly with a saying about foxes and birds. His point is that in order to truly follow him and proclaim the Good News to the world, we must be prepared to be even less secure than birds and animals who make their homes in various places. Disciples are called to follow Jesus wherever he may lead.

Then, more hopeful disciples come to Jesus, asking only for permission to take care of family obligations before they do. Jesus responds with more cryptic language, but his point is that living and proclaiming the Good News is the most important thing. It is even more important than burying the dead (which was a sacred responsibility in Jewish culture), because if a person ignored the Gospel for the sake of their obligations, then their spirit of faith would not truly be present in their actions. All of our actions should be informed by our faith; Jesus is not saying that we should not bury the dead, but that whatever we do should be at the service of the Gospel.

Lastly, Jesus makes a curious remark about plowing. When you plowed something by hand as in those days, if you looked back, you could not maintain a straight line. Jesus' message is that if you are someone who is so concerned about getting things right that you have to double-check your choice after the fact, you will not make for a good disciple. We need to trust and follow Jesus, from this we will be able to trust our actions and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in our life.

► **What are some things we can do to help us trust Jesus more?**

► **What does it look like when we place God as the first priority of our life? How are our actions informed by our faith?**

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 214.

Not everyone will desire to follow Christ, and many who do wish to follow him will not be up to it.

Our faith journey is one of trust in God. The challenge of discipleship is in surrendering our lives to God.

Jesus asks us to keep our focus on our discipleship, rather than the circumstances of our lives.

Act on the Word

Baggage

For this activity, you will need journals or paper and pens, as well as a blackboard or large writing surface that everyone can see.

Invite the teens to reflect on the following comments about attachment. During this Sunday’s Gospel reading, Jesus warns against letting mental or emotional attachments get in between us and our discipleship. It is usually easy to discern what material attachments are getting in the way of our relationship with God. However, it can be challenging to determine what emotions can interfere with our relationship with God, because our emotions can also strengthen that relationship. For example, our love for other human beings leads us to compassion and charity, and those are part of our discipleship.

Have the young people take a few moments to write about some general examples they think of when we consider how emotions can get in the way of our discipleship. What mental attachments prevent us from connecting with God or other people?

After the period of reflection is over, invite the teens to share what they wrote. Have somebody write them down on the board where everyone can see. Once you’ve filled the board or run out of new suggestions, ask teens to consider their own lives. Instruct them to write down and rank the top five obstacles in their own discipleship journey.

After allowing a few minutes of reflection, have the teens think about and write down how they could make a change in their life. Could they get rid of some of this baggage that gets in the way of following Jesus? Or, better yet, could they think of ways to convert these obstacles into something that benefits and supports their relationship with God?

After the final reflection period, invite the young people to share their results in pairs or small groups. If there is time, you can extend that sharing to the large group setting as well.

Closing Prayer

Ever-faithful God,

you lead us along our journey.

Renew our minds and hearts

so that we may follow you more closely.

Grant us the courage to release past hurts

and take on our call as disciples

to bring your Good News to all we meet.

Through Christ our Lord.

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.