

Read

2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a

Psalm 89:2-3, 16-17,
18-19 (2a)

Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

Matthew 10:37-42

LIVING THE WORD

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 28, 2020



REFLECTION

You have probably heard the story about the girl and the starfish. While walking along the beach, a young girl noticed that hundreds of starfish had washed ashore with the tide. Knowing these creatures would die if not returned to the water, the girl picked up a single starfish and returned it to the ocean. She repeated the process a few times before a passerby said, "What are you doing? There are hundreds of starfish here and you are but one person. There is no way can save them all." Confident and determined the girl responded, "Maybe not, but it made a difference for this one," and tossed the starfish into the sea.

In today's Gospel, Jesus highlights the importance of simple, seemingly insignificant kindnesses, saying that even sharing a cup of cold water with someone who is thirsty is a meaningful act of discipleship. It is easy to become overwhelmed by the challenges in our world. War, poverty, and violence are commonplace, and it seems that people are further distancing themselves from God. Rather than being overcome by these obstacles, Jesus invites us to keep moving forward through simple acts of love.

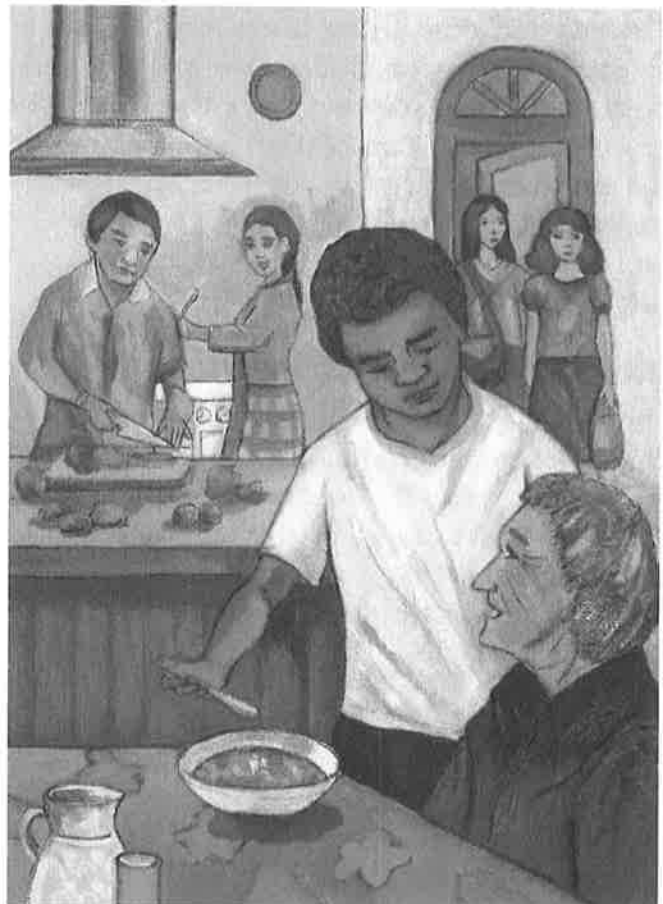
? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ When have you received someone in Jesus' name? How has that interaction shaped your life in Christ?
- ❖ What do you think Jesus means when he says, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24)?



ACTION

St. Teresa of Calcutta is often attributed to have said, "We can do no great things, only small things with great love." What does that look like for you today? Make an extra effort to take on all tasks today with great love, regardless of their significance or triviality.





June 28, 2020

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #97A

2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a

Psalm 89:2-3, 16-17, 18-19

Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

Matthew 10:37-42

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

A strong and challenging instruction to Jesus' Apostles centers upon placing their love first and foremost on Jesus, prior to anyone else. The fullness of these conditions of discipleship, however, lead one to be so intricately connected with Christ that one shares his reward.

Q FOCUS: Receive Christ wholeheartedly.

Liturgical Calendar Connection

The two most influential leaders of the early Church are honored on June 29 with the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul, Apostles. Peter was chosen by Jesus to lead his fledgling community. Paul, as a result of his conversion, was the dynamic Apostle who was most impactful in spreading the Good News to the Gentiles.

Church Teaching Connection

"Since Christ died for everyone, and since all are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery" (*Gaudium et spes*, 22).

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

Matthew 10:37-42

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

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

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

Jesus said to his apostles: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

"Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to

drink because the little one is a disciple—amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.”

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:

We have the great opportunity to be challenged once again by the teaching that we hear from Jesus in today's Gospel reading from Matthew. The passage opens up with an extremely strong statement from Jesus that may be quite difficult for us to swallow, at least at first hearing and first glance. What do you mean by this, Jesus? Are you really saying that if I love my own father or mother more than you, that I am not worthy of you? How can loving my parents more than you be a problem?

► **How does this resonate with you?**

Jesus lays out for us what the conditions are for one to truly be his disciple. Ultimately, it means giving one's entire self over to following Jesus as his disciple. It means giving your all to following Jesus and embracing his way of life. Ponder this:

► **What if in placing Jesus first in your life and loving him before all else allows you to then love your parents even more than you ever possibly could without knowing Jesus and walking with him?**

► **What if making Jesus the center of how you are walking in life allows you to be able to walk with others that much more steadily?**

► **What if by centering your life upon following Jesus you could be that much more authentically who God wants you to be in your life?**

Ultimately, the relationships that we share with our parents, siblings, other family members, and friends can be more fruitful if we center our lives on Christ.

Jesus infers that in order to be his follower, one must take up his or her own cross. This is the first time in Matthew's account Gospel that there is reference to a cross.

► **What do you know about crucifixion during the first century in the region Palestine?**

The use of a cross in the capital punishment of crucifixion was the preferred method of execution used by the Romans in Jesus' time, and it was specifically used as a form of punishment for people who were not Roman citizens.

► **Why do you think that Jesus mentions the need to pick up one's own cross in order to follow him?**

► **Do you think that he had some idea at this point in time that his journey was going to lead him to a hill, upon which he would literally carry his own Cross?**

Jesus' mention of carrying one's cross draws a connection with his own fate and the commitment of sharing his message which would one day take him to the Cross. Eventually, taking up our own crosses will lead to losing our own lives. In order to be a disciple of Jesus, we are called to give up our lives as we once knew them. This will ultimately lead us to a new life, in Christ. As St. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans, by being baptized into Christ, we are baptized into his death; in turn, however, we also rise to new life with him (see Romans 6:3–4). This is exciting news! Even though the path of discipleship is difficult, it leads us to a new life in Christ. And that is something in which we should rejoice!

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 222.

What is the cross in your life that you are confronted with as you live as a follower of Jesus?

In what ways can we work together as a community to better focus on what it is that Jesus is calling us to in our lives?

What is the reward for which you should work towards?

Act on the Word

Take Up Your Cross

For this activity, you will need brown construction paper, scissors, and markers.

Pass out the supplies to all of the students and invite them to cut out a cross, using as much of the paper as they can. Then, instruct them to write "My Cross" at the intersection of the cross. Next, invite the young people to enter into some prayer about what Jesus is asking of them in their lives in order to follow him. What is their cross that they need to pick up in order to follow him? Have them write words or draw pictures that are representative of their particular cross that they are needing to carry in order to follow Jesus. Conclude with a prayer asking Jesus to continue to show all of us the way to carry our crosses in service of him.

An Examination of Priorities

You will need sheets of paper and writing instruments for each of the young people.

Introduce this activity to the youth by having them call to mind what an examination of conscience is (a process of reviewing one's conscience to call to mind when they have stumbled in their path of discipleship and have not treated others as they should; have them recall the importance of doing this when preparing for confession). Next, tell them that instead of forming an examination of conscience, they are now going to spend some time doing an "examination of priorities."

Share with them about the idea that how we spend the time during our days speaks highly of where we place our priorities in our lives. Pass out

paper and pens or pencils to each of the teens. Have them each draw a large circle in the center of the paper. Instruct them that this circle represents the twenty-four hours in a regular day in their lives. For the next step, have them reflect on a regular school day and create a pie chart, creating slices within their circle to represent the amount of time that they spend doing different things during a day. Everything is fair game: time spent at school, eating, sleeping, at sports or clubs, with friends, at church, and so on. Have them attempt to create an honest assessment of how they prioritize their time and energy. When they are finished, invite them to focus in on how much (or little) they spend focusing on God (at Mass, praying, reading Scripture, sharing faith, doing service, and so on). Ask them to reflect upon why they feel they either place enough of a prioritization on God in their lives or not. Challenge them to think about how they can increase their prioritization of God in their lives.

Closing Prayer

*Loving God,
your Son showed us the way to you.
Guide us as we seek to deny what the world offers
and to follow you as we raise our own cross.
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.