



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



REFLECTION

When we live by truth, it can challenge others and even cause division. In last week's Gospel, Christ instructed the disciples not to waver out of fear of persecution. In today's Gospel, he continues by warning them not to compromise their souls out of a desire for a false peace either.

Have you ever been in a situation where a friend or family member wanted you to go along with something you knew was wrong? Keeping a secret, breaking a rule, or getting up to trouble together might even make you feel especially close to someone for a little while. Psychologists tell us that sometimes we can even become "trauma-bonded" to someone who has abused or manipulated us into violating our own deepest values!

What do we love in other people? Love is the way we respond to the good we see in the world and the people around us. Whenever you violate your conscience, you numb the part of you that finds joy in good and beauty. When the excitement of the moment fades, everything is a bit smaller and dingier than it was before.



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What do you think Jesus means by saying that the person who finds his other life will lose it (Matthew 10:39)?
- ❖ Think of your closest friend. What are the virtues and good traits that attracted you to that person?



Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 2, 2023



ACTION

It is scary to let go of our desire to please the people around us. It can feel like losing the things that make life worth living, or letting go of that sense of identity we get from peers, family, or mentors. Jesus tells his followers that they must lose their lives in order to find them. Pray today that Jesus give you the courage to live with integrity by the light of his love, whatever the cost.



"Voice of Truth"
—Casting Crowns

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cKm_mYVPQE



July 2, 2023

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #97A

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

Psalms 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

Today we will finish reading the discourse in the Gospel of Matthew which focuses on the instructions and encouragement Jesus has been giving his disciples he is sending out on mission. This passage specifically prompts an examination of our priorities; to whom are we loyal, and where is that leading us? While the relationships we have with friends and family are important, we are cautioned to never let those relationships lead us away from the path of goodness and truth in Christian discipleship. Keeping Christ as the top priority involves both individual personal sacrifice and an outward commitment to the Catholic social teaching principle of concern for the common good. Take the time to explain the meaning of the often-referenced Christian expressions: taking up one's cross and dying to oneself.

Q FOCUS: What prioritizing Christ and taking up your cross means in daily life.

Liturgical Calendar Connection

July 6 is the feast day of one of the Church's youngest canonized saint, Maria Goretti. Maria was from a devout, loving family who lived in extreme poverty in rural Italy. Maria cheerfully and diligently helped however she could, deepening her faith and devotion to God every day. Her goodness, however, didn't stop her next-door neighbor, Alessandro, from regularly making sexual advances. He was around eighteen or

twenty; she was eleven. Every time, Maria would tell him it was wrong and run away, but fearing trouble, she never told anyone. On the day of his attempted rape, she told him to stop for the sake of his own soul: he was committing a mortal sin. While fighting off his attack, Maria was stabbed fourteen times. Before she died from the severity of her wounds; out of love for Christ, Maria forgave her murderer.

Church Teaching Connection

"To love someone is to desire that person's good and to take effective steps to secure it. Besides the good of the individual, there is a good that is linked to living in society: the common good. It is the good of 'all of us,' made up of individuals, families and intermediate groups who together constitute society. It is a good that is sought not for its own sake, but for the people who belong to the social community and who can only really and effectively pursue their good within it" (*Caritas in veritate*, 7).

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:

► Who are the most important people in your life? What are your top priorities?

By telling us that we need to love Christ more than our parents—more than anyone or anything—Jesus is asking us to examine the implications of our priorities and loyalties. Parents and guardians are tasked with caring for our well-being, and the fourth commandment insists that we honor them. We can and should be able to honor our mother and father and also put God first, especially when those entrusted with our care are raising us to grow in faith and love of Christ. Healthy relationships—whether with family, friends, or romantic—should lead us toward the goodness and truth of God. Jesus is specifically addressing those times in our lives when we

need to choose between our loyalty to a loved one and doing what is right by God. No matter what, always put God first.

► How do you understand the phrase “take up your cross and follow me” from today’s Gospel?

► What are some examples of “crosses” that people must carry?

It’s common for people to interpret daily annoyances as a “cross.” But in Jesus’ day, crucifixion was a most humiliating form of capital punishment, specifically designed by the Romans to exact the greatest possible pain and torture, publicly, for all to see. So, “taking up one’s cross” was meant to imply real suffering and true sacrifice. In our daily life, this means trusting in God during the most difficult times of our lives; it means being willing to give up anything and everything. Knowing most of us aren’t facing literal crucifixion and death, Christians often use the phrase “dying to oneself” to capture this message. What needs to die is self-centeredness, self-interest, and selfishness. What needs to die is the habit of making decisions based only on what’s best for you. Out of concern for the well-being of all, we sacrifice something that we want (or have) to better care for those who would otherwise go without.

► When have you seen this “dying to self” being practiced in your daily life? Think about times when you witnessed someone who chose to give up something so that others could have it.

On a larger scale, Catholic social teaching refers to this dynamic as concern for the common good, making decisions based on what would be best for everyone involved. This means favoring policies and practices that may not personally benefit you, but rather ones that care for those most in need.

► What challenges and benefits do you see in practicing concern for the common good?

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.

No matter what, always put the goodness of God first, ahead of loyalty to any other person.

Take up your cross; trust in God with a willingness to suffer and sacrifice.

It is self-centeredness, self-interest, and selfishness that needs to die in a “dying to self.”

Act on the Word

Journaling on Dying to Self

For this activity, you will need journals and writing supplies.

Give the teens the opportunity to journal their personal response to the reflection on the Gospel. Help them focus on what “dying unto self” means in their own lives. Begin the reflection by providing concrete examples of self-sacrifice during the pandemic. Identifying the examples of others, like healthcare workers and first responders, helps to make the concept relatable, but the goal is for them to personally identify the moments when they have and have not taken up their cross and sacrificed their own desires for the sake of others.

Remind the teens that many of our practices during the global pandemic provide examples of “dying unto self.” Wearing a mask, social distancing, and remote learning meant personal sacrifice for public safety. Choosing to do what is right is often inconvenient and disappointing. Planned celebrations—birthdays, graduations, Thanksgiving and Christmas, sacraments, and more—were experienced differently because we needed to put the health and well-being of others ahead of our own desires.

Whether the teens reflect on their experiences in the pandemic or at any point in their own life, have them take the time now to journal their responses to the following reflection questions.

- ✧ What has been your experience with “dying to self”? Describe a time when you sacrificed your own desires for the needs of someone else. What motivated you to do this?
- ✧ As you think about the times you have “died to self,” what has been your attitude about “taking up your cross”? Do you complain? How might looking at this dynamic from the perspective of practicing your faith make a difference?

Closing Prayer

*God of justice and mercy,
you have commanded us
to place no other gods before you.
May we not mix our loyalties
but view all our commitments
through the lens of our covenant with you.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus
Christ, you Son,
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.