

Read

Genesis 18:20-32

Psalms 138:1-2a, 2b-3,
6-7a, 7b-8

Colossians 2:12-14

Luke 11:1-13



REFLECTION

"Don't give up. Don't ever give up!" declared former college basketball coach Jim Valvano to the crowd gathered at the 1993 ESPY awards. The awards show, which celebrates the best and brightest stars in the sports world, includes special recognition for a person who demonstrates courage in the face of adversity. ESPN honored Coach Valvano for his persistence—for never giving up—in his fight against cancer. Valvano started a foundation for cancer research, and refused to allow this painful disease to dampen his outlook on life.

Valvano said, "I will thank God for the day and the moment I have." Jesus lifts up this kind of persistence in today's Gospel: keep knocking, keep asking, keep trying, keep going. Pray to God in times of trial. Pray to God in moments of gratitude.

God is not a magician. God did not magically cure Valvano of cancer. But there's no doubt that God journeyed with Valvano every step of the way—just like God journeys with each of us. In his final months, Valvano sought deep relationships—and he found them. He sought a way to contribute to cancer research—and he found it. God listens when we don't give up.

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ When is a time in your life when you know God responded to your prayer?
- ❖ What do you need to ask God for today?

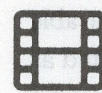
LIVING THE WORD

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 24, 2022

ACTION

It's easy to give up. We all do it all the time, in ways big and small. "I don't think I'm good enough to make the soccer team, so I'll just quit now." "There's no chance I'll get this paper written by the deadline. Why bother?" Persistence is the harder path. Next time you're faced with a decision to keep going or give up, take Coach Valvano's advice: Don't give up.



Watch Coach Valvano's
ESPY speech:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHKzH6zR8xE>



July 24, 2022

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #111C

Genesis 18:20-32

Psalms 138:1-2a, 2b-3, 6-7a, 7b-8

Colossians 2:12-14

Luke 11:1-13

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's Gospel passage contains Luke's version of the Our Father and further instruction on prayer. Our prayer ought to mirror Jesus' prayer. The parable of the visitor at midnight is sometimes interpreted as a simple give and take: God gives us exactly what we ask for, nothing different. God's response, however, is not always so straightforward. Through prayer, we continue seeking God, knocking at God's door, patiently waiting for it to open. Unlike human gift-giving, God grants us gifts even greater than what we believe that we need.

Q FOCUS: Disciples remain persistent in prayer.

Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week, we celebrate a variety of saints. On July 25, we remember St. James, one of the apostles. We also celebrate Sts. Joachim and Anne, the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary (July 26). On July 29, we remember St. Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus, whom we heard about in last week's Gospel. Choose one of these saints to learn more about and consider how the model of their life can help you in your prayer life.

Church Teaching Connection

In his apostolic exhortation *Christus vivit*, Pope Francis writes about prayer as friendship with Christ. To have a relationship with Christ, we must first open up to him. Francis writes, "Prayer is both a challenge and an adventure. . . . When we pray, 'we open everything we do' to him, and we give him room 'so that he can act, enter and claim victory'" (*Christus vivit*, 155). Today's Gospel encourages us to take on this challenge and adventure with persistence and integrity.

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 11:1-13

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.

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: / Father, hallowed be your name, / your kingdom come. / Give us each day our daily bread / and forgive us our sins / for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us, / and do not subject us to the final test."

And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine

has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,' and he says in reply from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.' I tell you, if he does not get up to give the visitor the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence.

"And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask 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:

Persistence in prayer is the theme for today's Gospel. Luke offers an account full of imagery: his version of the well-known Our Father prayer, the parable of the midnight visitor, and his reference to seeking and finding. All three parts to today's Gospel show us a pattern to persistence in the life of a disciple: seek, knock, and open the door.

Like Jesus, disciples must be persistent in their prayer. The first step to a life of prayer is seeking God. While Luke uses a metaphorical door in his image, the "doors" of our own prayer lives might not be so easily found.

► **What prayer practices have you previously tried? (For example, the rosary, Mass, meditation, lectio divina, art or music, etc.)**

► **Which practice(s) led you to encounter God? Which practices were frustrating and felt pointless or unfruitful?**

Various methods of prayer might speak to you now, while others may lead you to God later in life. The important part is to keep seeking and engaging different practices, being mindful of the ones that seem to "work" for you and coming back to ones you may not have tried in a while. Sometimes we find God in unexpected places and actions.

Knock, and the door will be opened. For this second stage of persistence in our life of discipleship, we look at Jesus' example of the midnight visitor. In it, the door is not immediately opened. Rather, the visitor must be persistent. God is persistent with us, and we are called to persistence in knocking on God's door, even when the door seems bolted shut, in times of spiritual darkness or distress. Sometimes in the Christian tradition this is called "dryness" or a "dark night."

► **Have you ever experienced spiritual dryness or darkness; a closed door? What resources helped you through this and into the light?**

Sometimes in our prayer lives we might feel like we are pounding at the door with no response. Trying different avenues to prayer, offering yourself and God some space, and talking to a mentor in prayer (such as a godparent, guardian, lay minister, parish priest, or teacher) about this experience are just a few methods of remaining persistent in challenging circumstances. During these times it is important to remember that God is always persistent in knocking on our door. He is always there, even if we can't always feel his presence. God never abandons us.

► **Who would you turn to in a time of spiritual distress? How might you develop these relationships during times of spiritual peace?**

Finally, in Jesus' parable the door is opened, the visitor welcomed in and their needs tended to. While God does not always provide exactly what we ask for, like some sort of divine waiter, we are told in the Gospel that God does respond and provide. Persistence and patience ground our lives in fruitful prayer and relationship with 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 230.

A life of prayer is not easy; we meet many challenges along the way.

The communion of saints and others who serve as mentors in prayer help us through dark times.

Finding effective methods of prayer can ground our relationships with God.

Act on the Word

Practices of Prayer

For this activity, you will need various prayer method guides or instructions (consider using practices that you and other ministers in your community find fruitful in your own lives), Bibles, candles, other elements to provide prayerful spaces for students. The young people will also need their journals or paper and pen.

Introduce teens to various prayer practices in today's activity. They may know some of these already, or might remember them from previous activities during the year. Even if they already are familiar with them, it is good to remind them of all the different prayer practices the Church has, especially in light of today's Gospel reflection. Set up prayer environments for each practice so that teens have an authentic, prayerful experience of that practice. Depending on time constraints, leaders may choose to allow students to try multiple practices, or asking teens to choose one practice that is new to them. Choose from practices that are familiar to you, or use any of the following:

- * The Rosary
- * *Lectio* or *visio divina*
- * Examen prayer
- * Ignatian imaginative prayer
- * The Jesus prayer
- * Meditation

At the end, ask students to journal about their prayer experience, paying attention to when they felt uncomfortable, relaxed, connected to God or those around them, etc. Invite them to reflect on what was happening deeply, under these feelings. Finally, they should consider what practice they might try again, potentially adding it to their weekly routine.

Closing Prayer

Father, parent of us all,

*Teach us to pray with the confidence
and persistence*

that Jesus taught his disciples.

*May our asking, seeking, and knocking
free us to find you, even when you make
yourself known*

*in ways different from what we dream
or expect.*

We ask this through your Son, our Lord,

Jesus Christ,

who lives and reigns with you in the unity

of the Holy Spirit,

one 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.