

Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10

Psalm 40:2, 3, 4, 18

Hebrews 12:1-4

Luke 12:49-53

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 14, 2022



REFLECTION

Sometimes the Christian life is represented as a solution to all the pain of our world—just follow these rules and do the right things, and you will be safe from conflict and suffering. However, Christ tells us that the opposite is true in today's Gospel: following in his footsteps means experiencing rejection and division.


So, why would we want to follow Him? The peace this world offers us is attractive, but without justice, it comes at too great a cost. It is impossible to stand with the Gospel while conforming to any single party, ideology, or peer group. When we speak out against abuse, prejudice, abortion, discrimination, and exploitation, we are sure to ruffle feathers. In this way, Christ calls each of us to be a sign of contradiction in the world, bringing his light into the dark places.



ACTION

There are many examples of great men and women who faced rejection as a consequence of their work for justice. While not everyone is called to be Sophie Scholl or Martin Luther King Jr., even very small interactions can force you to choose between following your conscience and "keeping peace" with your friends. You can probably think of times when you chose a false unity over doing what you knew to be right. Perhaps you saw someone being bullied but were afraid to intervene, or perhaps you chuckled at an offensive joke rather than call out sexism. Today, take a few minutes to pray for the courage to follow Jesus even when it is unpopular.

"Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are."

—St. Augustine 



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What do you think is meant by the metaphor of Jesus setting the world on fire?
- ❖ How is Jesus' own life an example of the difficulties and joys of remaining true to your faith?



August 14, 2022

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #120C

Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10

Psalms 40:2, 3, 4, 18

Hebrews 12:1-4

Luke 12:49-53

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

Jesus brings strong words to today's Gospel. While we understand Jesus to be the Prince of Peace, today he says that he has come to bring division. Households will split, mothers and fathers will be against sons and daughters. We know that the fire of the promised Spirit comes at Pentecost, but following Jesus has a cost. The more we give our lives to Christ, the more we are asked to examine our relationship with the world. When we do this, we realize that the culture of the world is opposed to the kingdom of God. If our faith looks just like society, we may be doing it wrong. That is why division comes before peace. Committing to the Christian life is not easy, but is possible through God's help.

Q FOCUS: *Just like a fire, lives touched by the Holy Spirit are changed.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Today is the feast day of St. Maximilian Kolbe. Priest, missionary, and martyr, he died at the concentration camp at Auschwitz during World War II. Notably, he took the place of a man condemned to die and was injected with a deadly poison. He had a devotion to Mary, under her title of the Immaculate Conception, and was also a Franciscan priest. He is the patron saint of people affected by drug addiction, prisoners, families, and the pro-life movement.

Church Teaching Connection

"The *fire* that Jesus speaks of is the fire of the Holy Spirit, the presence living and working in us from the day of our Baptism. It—the fire—is a creative force that purifies and renews, that burns all human misery, all selfishness, all sin, which transforms us from within, regenerates us and makes us able to love. Jesus wants the Holy Spirit to blaze like fire in our heart, for it is only from the heart that the fire of divine love can spread and advance the Kingdom of God" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, August 14, 2016).

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 12:49-53

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 said to his disciples: "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished! "Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three; a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law against her

daughter-in-law and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”

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 lit a candle or made a fire? What is the nature of fire? What is it like and what does it do?**

There is something primal about fire. It grabs our attention and holds it. Fire emits light and heat. It captivates us to the point where we cannot look away. Whatever fire touches is changed. The wick of the candle is burned and shortened. The wax is melted and gone. Fire is transformational.

Fire is also powerful. As St. Francis of Assisi once said, “All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle.” One small, burning flame can light up an entire room. A group of candles can dispel the darkness. This is demonstrated in a wonderful way at the beginning of the Church’s Easter Vigil liturgy. Candles are lit from the paschal candle (which represents Christ) and shared throughout the congregation that waits in darkness for the readings to begin. The Church also uses the image of fire as one of the major symbols of the Holy Spirit (think about the Pentecost story in Acts 2).

In today’s Gospel, Jesus tells us that he has “come to set the earth on fire” and that he wishes it were already burning! While speaking metaphorically here, we can understand what he wants to say. Jesus has come to bring a fire of faith burning in our hearts. He wants to set us on fire with the Holy Spirit.

► **What are some ways that you think faith is like fire?**

A life on fire with God’s love is a life transformed. Just like a candle, it can never go back to the way it was before it started burning, but it still continues to shine even though it is changed.

A fire seen from far away looks like a small speck of light. A fire experienced up close is full of power, heat, light, and energy. These can also be descriptive words for our faith. When we are on fire with God’s love, we are praying with purpose and intentionality. We participate in the life of our community and share our gifts. We serve with our whole hearts and we say yes to the opportunities that present themselves to us. We are generous, kind, and courageous as we share ourselves.

As good as that fire of faith is, Jesus gives us a warning. A faith on fire causes division. When we follow Jesus, we run counter to the world’s values. Living an authentic faith sides us with those on the margins of society. Following Jesus comes with a cost. Jesus is not hiding this fact from us, nor is he promising that our lives will be problem-free. Instead, he reveals his desire that our faith and actions set the whole world ablaze with his love.

► **What are some ways that you or young people your age can fulfill Jesus’ desire for a world filled with his love?**

► **What are some of the challenges that teens might face when they choose to follow their faith rather than conform to what society says?**

► **What might some of the rewards be of filling the world, or at least your corner of it, with God’s love?**

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 6.

Jesus tells the crowd that he came to bring fire to the earth. Do our lives exhibit this fire of faith?

Living a life on fire with faith also comes with obstacles, but we will not face these obstacles alone.

Think about various saints you know; how do their lives act as a spark for the fire of your faith?

Act on the Word

Candle Prayer Reflection

For this activity, you will need a votive candle for each participant (they can be electric if necessary, but try to have at least one live candle if possible), matches or a lighter, and a Bible or a copy of today's Gospel reading. If open flames are not allowed in your space, play a video of a candle with flame during the reflection so the young people can engage with the movement of fire.

This is a guided prayer reflection based on today's Gospel reading. The activity should be a quiet and meditative experience, utilizing the senses.

Any seating arrangement can be used for this prayer activity. Each teen should be given a tea light or votive candle. Begin the prayer with the lights on. Instrumental or meditative praise and worship music can be softly playing in the background.

Begin with the sign of the cross. The leader will light their candle first and read the beginning of today's Gospel, Luke 12:49–50. (If using the reading in this resource, stop after the words “until it is accomplished!”) Similar readings about light, such as Matthew 5:14–16, can also be used. Share with the group a few insights that were gained during the above reflection and discussion.

With quiet reflection, have each participant light their candle (or turn it on). Invite the participants to hold their candle in their hand (or put it on a safe surface). Turn off the lights so that the room is illuminated by the candles alone.

Use the following words to guide the reflection or use your own:

Today we heard the voice Jesus say, “I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it was already blazing!” As we reflect on these words, we will examine the nature of the fire before us.

Look at the flame of the candle. What do you see? What colors can you spot in the fire? How does the fire move? How does it react to its environment? (Pause to allow participants time to observe the flame of the candle.)

Breathe as you observe the candle. Take deep and measured breaths. Count to four as you inhale and four as you exhale. Allow yourself to relax as you take in the candle.

Jesus wishes the world was already blazing with the fire of his love and our faith. This fire has energy, power, and light. Darkness cannot overcome it. This fire transforms all that it touches. (Pause for silent reflection.)

We pray that we accept the fire of the Holy Spirit into our lives. May our lives reflect the light of Christ. May we be transformed by God's unconditional love. May we share it with those around us, to fill this world with light and hope.

Closing Prayer

*All-powerful God,
you share your light of truth
and passionately call us
to transform our world.
Guide our efforts to live our
faith zealously.
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.Itp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.