

Read

Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18

Psalm 34:2-3, 17-18,
19, 23

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

Luke 18:9-14

LIVING THE WORD

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time October 27, 2019



REFLECTION

In today's Gospel, the Pharisee fools himself. Likewise, we can deaden our consciences over time to the point where our conscience no longer tells us what is bad or good. Let's imagine two scenarios:

1. You believe you are so naturally great at running that you sign up for a marathon, brag to your friends you'll win, and don't train. On race day, your friends show up to see you finish dead last because you lied to yourself.

2. You sign up for the marathon but know it will be tough and you're not good enough yet. You design a training strategy and work hard to stick to it for months. On race day, your friends who formerly laughed at you see you finish among the front-runners because you knew your weaknesses and you overcame them. Which person would you rather be? Which person is more like the Pharisee? Honesty is hard but completely worth it.

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How do I know when my conscience is telling me something is right or wrong? What does it feel like?
- ❖ What is a strength I already have that will help me "run the race" well?



ACTION

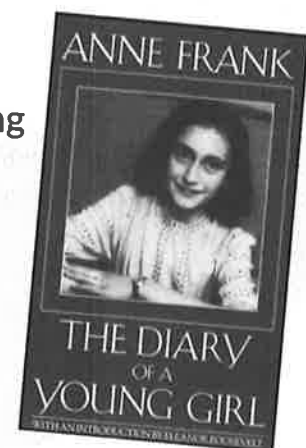
St. Paul says he has "competed well" and "finished the race" (2 Timothy 4:7). This life is like a marathon rather than a sprint. With a group, make an inspirational poster of the best quotes you can find to help you stick to your race. (Don't forget that honesty with yourself is an important part of the race!) Here are few for starters:

- ❖ "The Lord is greater than the giants you face," "How wonderful that no one need wait a moment before starting to improve the world" (Anne Frank).
- ❖ "Use the gifts you have received and pass on the love that has been given to you" (St. Teresa of Avila).



Read *The Diary of a Young Girl*, the true story of Anne Frank,

a Jewish girl who hid from the Nazis during World War II. Her story has become an inspiration and testimony of faith and perseverance.





October 27, 2019

THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #150C

Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18

Psalm 34:2-3, 17-18, 19, 23

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

Luke 18:9-14

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

It is easy to get caught in the trap of thinking ourselves better than others. Rather than focusing on the ways in which we fail, we see others' weaknesses and failings. Today's Gospel leads us to consider our need for God's abundant mercy, and how, having received God's mercy, we are called to share it with others.

Q FOCUS: *To trust in God's mercy.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

We celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints on Friday this week, and the Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day) on Saturday. These liturgical observances remind us that all of the faithful ones who have gone before us are with us now. Each relied on God's mercy in earthly life and intercede for us as we trust in God's goodness.

Church Teaching Connection

Jesus communicates God's mercy, showing us the depths of God's love, and his desire to be with us in every situation. We cannot fully comprehend God's mercy, and yet we rely on it, trusting that mercy awaits us each moment of our lives. As we know God's mercy, so are we to show it through our daily living (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2447).

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 18:9-14

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 addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. "Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity—greedy, dishonest, adulterous—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes with my whole income.' But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.' I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for

whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

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:

In today's Gospel, Jesus shares a parable of two very different men. One, a Pharisee, and the other a tax collector. Remember that the Pharisees whom Jesus often addresses were religious leaders. Not only did they hold people to the letter of the Law in ways that placed burdens upon the people, they were convinced of their own righteousness, judging others while failing to consider their own sinfulness. Recall also that the tax collectors were especially despised among the Jewish people for their collaboration with the Roman government and the frequent practice of extorting money beyond the tax that was owed.

Jesus addresses the parable to “those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else” (Luke 18:9). The Pharisee in the parable prays to himself. And though he prays, his prayer is about justifying himself while looking askance at the tax collector. The evidence he provides about his own actions are likely truthful: many Pharisees fasted on Monday and Thursday, and, as he said in the Gospel text, he may very well have tithed. The issue is not what he does, but rather his judgment of others and his failure to consider his own life honestly in the sight of God.

The tax collector on the other hand does recognize his sinfulness. He is honest with himself before God, and his prayer simply asks for God's mercy.

A simple prayer that many people use is taken from the words of the tax collector. It is known as the Jesus Prayer: “Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” The prayer is

repeated as a mantra, inviting us to open our hearts and minds, to be attentive to the ways in which we need God's mercy, and the incredible offer of mercy that is always waiting for us.

► When you think of the word mercy, what first comes to mind?

► How would you describe the difference between the Pharisee and the tax collector?

Mercy is compassion or forgiveness, which is offered to one who does not deserve such care. God is merciful. Even though we often miss the mark, failing to do as we know we should and as we are expected to act, God constantly offers us mercy. We do not earn God's mercy, just as we do not earn God's love, compassion, or salvation. It is a gift, freely given. While mercy is most especially experienced between us and God, we also show and share mercy to one another. In fact, this is our call as Christian people. Because God is merciful, we are called to be merciful as well, as a sign and reflection of the incredible mercy of God.

► When have you received mercy? Perhaps from a parent or friend, a teacher or coach?

The final verse of today's Gospel brings us back to something we heard Jesus say earlier this season: “for whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14:11).

► What does this mean to you in relationship to this Gospel passage? How does it apply to the Pharisee and the tax collector in the parable?

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 54.

How have you experienced God's mercy?

In what ways are you challenged by the call to be merciful?

How does mercy characterize the life of the Christian?

Act on the Word

Mercy in the Bible

For this exercise, have Bibles available, paper, pens, and an excerpt from the section on mercy from an online or print copy of a concordance.

Divide into small groups of four to five teens. Ask the teens to look up the passages listed in the concordance on mercy. If they have not previously used a concordance, walk them through the use of this resource. Invite the groups to think about these things as they read the passages: What does the passage tell them about God's mercy? What does this call them to do as a Christian and recipient of God's mercy? Following their reading and discussion, invite teens to talk about their experiences of mercy personally—mercy received and mercy given.

Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

Prepare a handout with the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, listed below. Have pens, blank paper, and markers available.

The Corporal Works of Mercy

- ✧ Feed the Hungry
- ✧ Give Drink to the Thirsty
- ✧ Clothe the Naked
- ✧ Shelter the Homeless
- ✧ Visit the Sick
- ✧ Visit the Imprisoned
- ✧ Bury the Dead
- ✧ Care for Creation

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

- ✧ Counsel the Doubtful
- ✧ Instruct the Ignorant
- ✧ Admonish Sinners
- ✧ Comfort the Afflicted
- ✧ Forgive Offenses
- ✧ Bear Wrongs Patiently
- ✧ Pray for the Living and the Dead

Give each teen a copy of the handout with the works of mercy listed (or have a poster board with the works listed for their reference). Assign each person one of the works. Ask them to reflect on how they and their peers can offer mercy in this way. In other words, what does this work of mercy "look like" for a person their age and in their circumstances? After the teens have reflected individually, invite them to share with the large group. If more than one person had a work, invite them to share together, complementing and adding to the ideas created by one another.

Following this sharing, ask the teens to make a commitment to offer at least one corporal and one spiritual work of mercy in the coming week. Invite them to write their commitment down and to put it in a place where it will be visible as a reminder. Ask them to report back the next time you are together. What was their experience of sharing mercy?

Closing Prayer

*God of truth and mercy,
help us to accept ourselves and others with
patience and compassion.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

For the Holyday of Obligation

To help teens prepare for All Saints, 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.