

Read

Exodus 22:20-26

Psalm 18:2-3, 3-4,
47, 51

1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10

Matthew 22:34-40



REFLECTION

Summarizing the rules of our faith can be tricky because it feels like there are so many. But in today's Gospel, Jesus gives us the foundation for what our faith means. Jesus says that the most important law to follow is to love God with our whole heart, soul, and mind. He quickly follows this up by giving the second greatest command of our faith: to love one another. He is challenging his listeners to embody God's love first and then to share that love with the world.

At this time in your life, it might be hard to love yourself well, much less embody the love of God. There are so many pressures to look a certain way, to have certain grades, or to be the most outgoing, popular person around. When you give in to those pressures, you might accidentally move away from the love of God. It is incredibly hard to love our neighbor if we don't love ourselves first. And we can't truly love ourselves without first loving God. Scripture says that you are made in the image of God and that you are a beloved child of God, so the question is not whether you are worthy of love but how you can learn to truly believe it.



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What are different ways you can love God with your mind, spirit, and body?
- ❖ How might your community benefit from your skills and talents?

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time October 29, 2023



ACTION

For so many teens naming what they like about themselves is one of the hardest tasks to undertake. Some people make jokes about the topic and for others the fear of sharing their positive characteristics is paralyzing. But celebrating the way that God has made you is not bragging. Once you learn to love yourself as God loves you, you will be free to love others. This week find five Scripture passages about being made in God's image or about the way God loves you. Then come up with five positive things you like about yourself. Write all of these things on sticky notes and put them where you will see them often or add them as reminders in your phone and set them to go off throughout the week.



"Try"—Colbie Caillat

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXoZLPSw8U8>



October 29, 2023

THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #148A

Exodus 22:20-26

Psalms 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51

1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10

Matthew 22:34-40

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

When faced with another test by the religious leaders, Jesus simply says that the greatest commandment is to love God and that the second is to love your neighbor as yourself. Everything else that we do and all other laws and commandments of our faith are built upon the foundation of those two commandments. Therefore, these should be lens through which we view our lives of discipleship. What does it mean to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul? What does it look like to love our neighbor? What does it look like to love ourselves?

Q FOCUS: *The most important commandments are to love God above all and to love others.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On November 2, we celebrate the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day). On this day, we pray for all those who have passed away. We pray that they may be welcomed into God's heavenly kingdom. We trust in the goodness, mercy, and love of God to bring them into eternal life. Throughout the month of November, we are encouraged to continue to hold these people in prayer in a special way.

Church Teaching Connection

"Indeed, we were created to love and to be loved. God, who is Love, created us to make us participants in his life, to be loved by him and to love him, and with him, to love all other people. This is God's 'dream' for mankind. And to accomplish it we need his grace; we need to receive within us the capacity to love which comes from God himself. Jesus offers himself to us in the Eucharist for this very reason. In it we receive Jesus in the utmost expression of his love, when he offered himself to the Father for our salvation" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, October 29, 2017).

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 22:34-40

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.

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a scholar of the law, tested him by asking, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love

your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

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:

Today we hear about another test the Pharisees give Jesus; they ask him which commandment is the most important. This question is tricky because all of God's commandments are important and they are making him choose the most important.

Jesus tells them in reply that the most important commandment is to love the Lord with all of their heart, soul, and mind. That seems like a pretty good answer to a question that was designed to test Jesus. But Jesus doesn't just stop there. He immediately follows up his statement with another, stating that the second most important commandment is that they are supposed to love their neighbor as they love themselves.

► How might you have responded to the question?

► What do you think is the most important thing about your faith and your relationship with God?

Jesus doesn't want to make our faith complicated. He is not giving them a difficult equation they must solve to claim their faith. He keeps it simple. However, sometimes the simplest things can seem complicated when we try to fit them into our life.

► How many extracurricular activities are you involved in?

► How many of you have a job?

► How many of you have responsibilities at home?

Even beyond these responsibilities, you also have the responsibilities of studying, doing homework, and working on projects. Being here at this youth gathering took up time on your schedule as did all of the other things you do. We are all so busy. It seems that at some point, it became unacceptable to not be busy. So then where does faith fit in?

Jesus knows the distraction that our busyness can be. His response in today's Gospel gives us two commandments that we can use to frame our lives. First, to follow him, we need to love him with all we are. Do you love him with your heart? Is your intent to unite your heart with his? To care about the things he cares about? To love others the way that he loves you? Do you love him with all of your soul? Does your very being want to be with him? Do you yearn to talk with him in prayer? Do you feel at peace when you sit in the silent church? Do you love him with all of your mind? Do you think about him? Do you read about matters of faith? Do you meditate on the mysteries of the Rosary or parts of Scripture? Do the actions you do point to Jesus and his way of life? These types of questions can help us review our daily habits and shape our lives around God's love.

The second part of Jesus' response focuses our hearts outward. Do we love others as we love ourselves? Do we need to love ourselves more? Do we need to be more aware of how we treat our friends, strangers, and family members? When we love God with our whole heart, soul, and body, the second commandment of loving others will come naturally. It must, otherwise our love of God is flawed. Does this mean we have to be perfect in that love? Absolutely not. Jesus knows we are imperfect. He loves you more than you will ever understand and he is always ready to welcome you back when you fail. This is also why we have all of the other laws and commandments of our faith. As Jesus said, they flow from the foundational love of God, neighbor, and self. They all work together to help us be good disciples.

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.

Love God with your whole heart, soul, and mind.

Love others as you love yourself.

Jesus is ready to welcome us back when we return to his love.

Act on the Word Heart, Soul, and Mind

You will not need any materials for this activity.

Divide the teens into small groups of about five people each. Ask each group to pick an injustice they are aware of either in their community or in the world. Have the groups spend several minutes discussing how their situation might be different if those involved looked at the situation through the lens of loving God with their whole heart, soul, and mind and their neighbors as themselves. Then have each small group share their thoughts with the larger group.

After each group has shared their reflections, lead a large-group discussion on what it looks like practically to love your neighbor as yourself by using these questions:

- ✳ What are some factors that might cause teens to not love themselves?
- ✳ How can you help your friends and peers see themselves in a more positive light?
- ✳ How can we share God's love with people who are hurting?

- ✳ How can we share God's love with people who are happy?
- ✳ How can we share God's love with strangers?
- ✳ How can we share God's love with ourselves?

Closing Prayer

*In your great love, O God,
you have gathered your people
and bestowed on them the fullness of salvation.
May the love that you have entrusted to us
through your Son, Jesus Christ,
shape the witness of our lives
and make us worthy servants of him,
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.itp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.