

Read

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

Psalms 23:1-2, 2-3, 5-6

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

Matthew 25:31-46

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

November 26, 2023



REFLECTION

Today's Gospel reading is part of Jesus' final teachings to his disciples before the events of his passion and death. They ask Jesus what will happen when he comes at the end of time. He gives a long series of teachings, some of which we have heard over the past several weeks, with today's passage concluding them.

Today's reading challenges us to look at our lives and honestly evaluate how well we are doing taking care of the most vulnerable people in our society. Look around your community: Are there people who are hungry or afraid? Are there people who are deemed different and therefore not treated well? Scripture teaches us that we are all made in the image of God. In today's Gospel reading, we hear Jesus identify with the poor and vulnerable. Those whom society rejects are the very people that Jesus is most concerned about in this passage.



ACTION

Sometimes when we become caught up in why people are suffering, we lose sight of Jesus' teaching: to treat each person we encounter as an encounter with Jesus himself. We stop seeing them as individuals with their own stories, fears, and hopes. Instead, we might see them as "them," some generic group that needs help. But each person is worthy of our love because God loves each person. Inspired by Catholic social teaching and Jesus' teachings about the dignity of each human being, the Catholic Worker movement began in the 1930s. Spend some time this week learning about this organization and the work of its founders, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. The website <https://www.catholicworker.org/> is a good place to start.



Check out this short introduction to who Dorothy Day was <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CphJLmS8-Fc>

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How would your encounters with others change if you purposely looked for Jesus in each encounter?
- ❖ What changes can you make in your daily life to be more open to helping others?



November 26, 2023

SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

LECTIONARY #160A

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

Psalm 23:1-2, 2-3, 5-6

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

Matthew 25:31-46

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

In today's Gospel passage, Jesus is telling the disciples what it will be like when the Son of Man comes back in all of his glory to judge people at the end of time. He tells them that it will be like separating the sheep from the goats. The sheep are the group that are true disciples. They served Jesus through their service to others—no matter their rank, status, or ability to repay the kindness shown to them. The goats were the ones that only looked to serve themselves. Jesus is clear in the Gospel that we are to find him in each person we encounter. The young people are invited to consider what it means to serve the ones that cannot repay us, the ones we don't like, and the ones that are hard to love.

Q FOCUS: *To love and serve God is to love and serve all those we encounter.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On November 30, we celebrate St. Andrew, one of the twelve apostles. The Gospels tell us that Andrew was the brother of Peter. Like the other apostles, Andrew was called by Jesus to leave his life and work behind and follow him. Even though we don't know much about Andrew, his place among the apostles of Jesus reveals to us his great faith and commitment to sharing the Good News. Andrew is believed to have preached in Greece and Asia Minor. Tradition has it that Andrew was crucified on an x-shaped

cross, which is now known as a "St. Andrew's Cross" or a "saltire." He is the patron saint of fishermen and several countries, including Scotland.

Church Teaching Connection

"Those who have experienced in their own lives the Father's mercy cannot remain indifferent before the needs of their brothers. The lesson of Jesus that we have heard does not allow escape routes: I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was naked, displaced, sick, in prison and you assisted me (Mt 25:35-36). You cannot stonewall a person who is hungry: he must be fed. Jesus tell us this! The works of mercy are not theoretical ideas, but concrete testimonies. They oblige us to roll up our sleeves to alleviate suffering" (Pope Francis, Jubilee Audience, June 30, 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

Matthew 25:31-46

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 disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the

sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

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:

We are given the ultimate moment of reflection on who we say we are and how our actions define us in the Gospel passage today. We see that our actions here on earth have eternal consequences.

► Usually the word "consequences" is associated with something negative, but the word just means "results" or "effects." What are some positive consequences of actions that you have taken this past week?

In today's Gospel, Jesus is talking to the disciples about what will happen when the Son of Man, who is Jesus himself, comes at the end of time. This passage comes toward the end of Jesus' ministry, shortly before he celebrates the Last Supper and is crucified. He is giving the disciples instructions about what will come next and what God is looking for in their life of discipleship.

The path of discipleship is hard, but the consequence or effect of good discipleship is eternal life with God. As we have heard over the past several weeks, not everyone who claims to have faith in God actually reflects that faith in their actions. For example, there are Pharisees who say one thing about their faith but do something different. But we also know that there are disciples, at that time and today, who are honestly trying to find the way to holiness, even if they are not always successful.

Jesus describes this beautiful moment when the Son of God comes in all grandeur and glory. This is his moment to separate those who are truly his disciples and those who are merely imposters. At the heart of this moment is that the sheep saw Jesus in everyone they encountered. They knew that to serve God meant to serve their neighbor. They took a chance to be hospitable and kind to everyone, no matter their status or how they could be repaid. These are the true disciples of Jesus. These are the ones that we are called to be like.

► Think about the people you encounter in school, at work, or in your activities. How might you apply the actions of the sheep to those communities?

It is important to remember that the motivation for our actions is as important as our actions. We show love and care for strangers because we love God and we are following Jesus. The effects of these actions raise up the poor, give witness to the Good News, and draw us closer to 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 74.

We are called to love all, regardless of their status and how they can repay us.

Jesus is in the heart of everyone, not just those who we like.

Disciples need to reflect God's love in both their words and their actions.

Act on the Word

We Are All in This Together

For this activity, you will need open spaces in your meeting room.

Open the activity by asking the teens to stand in a circle. If the group has more than ten people, ask them to form smaller circles. Once they are in the circle(s), ask the young people to hold hands with someone across from them (left hands with left hands and right hands with right hands). They are forming a human knot and must untangle themselves without letting go of one another's hands, although they are allowed to reposition their grasp if needed. Once they have untangled their circle(s) or have come to a point at which they can't untangle anymore, invite the teens to sit down for a brief reflection on the activity.

Point out to the young people that these knots are just like our lives. Human beings are always interconnected with one another, even with those we might not know. It took help from different perspectives of

the circle to see how they could best untangle themselves. This process took time, took options, took patience, and took us really looking at each other. Then ask the teens to share their thoughts about how they can apply this lesson to their own lives and today's Gospel message. Some questions to guide the discussion can include: How might their kind actions help others untangle some parts of their lives? Why does it matter if they help someone at school? How can it be that their lives are connected in some way with strangers? How does working with others help us in our life of discipleship?

Closing Prayer

*In your unbounded goodness, O God,
you sent your Son to be a shepherd for
all your people.*

*Bestow on us the virtue of courage
that we might imitate his compassion.*

*Grow within us a spirit of servant-leadership
that we might imitate his ministry.*

*Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your 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.

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 Christ and 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:

We are given the ultimate moment of reflection on who we are and how our actions define us in the Gospel passage today. We see that our actions here on earth have eternal consequences.