



REFLECTION

Have you ever sat in the dark so long that your eyes adjusted and became used to it? You might be able to see some things if there is faint light somewhere else, but you might also run into something that you couldn't see clearly. Or, think about when you wake up and the lights are on or the sun is shining in your window. You may scramble for the covers or shut your eyes quickly to return to the darkness because the light is too bright.

In today's reading, Jesus reminds us that the reason he came into the world was to reveal the light. He is the light of the world. It might be painful at first to see his light and to adjust to being in the light after being in the darkness of our broken world for so long. But our life and our world are better in God's light. We can see the truth of who we are and who God is. We don't have to live in deception but can live in freedom and without fear.

The darkness of sin and suffering cannot defeat the light. One solitary candle cannot be overwhelmed by the dark. It shines brightly for all to see. Jesus invites us to believe in him and be saved by his grace. He won't leave us in the dark.



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Jesus says that people prefer darkness over light. Reflect on that statement and bring it to God in prayer.
- ❖ Where do you need the light of Christ to shine in your life?

Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 10, 2024



ACTION

When you light a candle, that light can be shared to other candles to light them, too. Make a commitment this week to share your light with others in your community. Do extra work around your home, lightening the load for your family. Volunteer at a local agency to share the light of Christ for those in most need. Advocate for the poor and vulnerable through legislation in your local government. Find a concrete way to share your light.



"Light the Way"

—Matt Maher <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=by8LnXsqhYU>



March 10, 2024

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

LECTIONARY #32B

2 Chronicles 36:14–16, 19–23

Psalm 137: 1–2, 3, 4–5, 6

Ephesians 2:4–10

John 3:14–21

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

This Gospel begins with recalling a story from Numbers 21:4–9. The Israelites had been freed from Egyptian slavery and were on their journey to the promised land. They had experienced God's deliverance in profound ways, yet their patience had been worn out by the journey. They were hungry, thirsty, and tired and began to complain against God. God sends serpents that bite them and many of them die, yet God also provides a way for their healing. There are many parallels that can be drawn from this story and the way God gave us Jesus to save us from our sins. God is always offering us his love and mercy.

Q FOCUS: *Open your hearts to God's great love.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

St. Seraphina was born in Italy in 1238. She endured many sufferings in her short life of fifteen years. Her family was poor. After her father died, she fell seriously ill with a disease that left her deformed and eventually paralyzed. In the midst of battling her illness, her mother died. Despite all the sufferings she endured, she still found comfort and consolation in the cross of Christ. It is said she never complained and remained faithful to God while having a disposition that radiated the light of Christ. St. Seraphina is remembered on March 12.

Church Teaching Connection

"God the Father loves humanity to the point of 'giving' his Son: he gave him in the Incarnation and he gave him in handing him over to death. The purpose of God's gift is the eternal life of every person: in fact, God sends his Son into the world not to condemn it, but so that the world that it might be saved through Jesus. Jesus' mission is a mission of salvation, of salvation for everyone" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, March 14, 2021).

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.

**Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ,
king of endless glory.**

Gospel

John 3:14–21

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of

the only Son of God. And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.

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:

This Sunday's Gospel contains one of the most well-known verses in all of Scripture, John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."

► Are you familiar with this verse? In what contexts have you heard it quoted?

► Why do think this particular verse, of all the verses in Scripture, is so popular? What does it mean to you?

This Sunday is also called Laetare (pronounced "lay-tar-ay") Sunday. "Laetare" is Latin for "rejoice!" The word "laetare" comes from the entrance antiphon that begins Mass. In the middle of this Lenten season, we are invited to have hope and rejoice in the Good News (this is why the priest might wear a rose-colored garment today). Our Gospel reading today speaks to that joy—God is love and his love for us, even in our fallen and sinful ways, is so great that he gives us his only-begotten Son.

► In what ways does God's great love bring joy to your life or the lives of those around you?

At the beginning of today's Gospel, we hear a reference to an Old Testament story about Moses and a serpent (see Numbers 21:4–9). When the Israelites were in the desert, God sent serpents among them because of their incessant complaining against him even though he was the one who had freed them from their slavery in Egypt! God offered them a chance to be healed if they looked at the mounted bronze serpent that Moses held up before them. Yes, the people were punished for their complaints, but God does not leave them in their punishment. God offers mercy, a way to be restored. This is what we are offered in the person of Jesus Christ, a way to be restored to a relationship with God.

The Israelites suffered under Egyptian slavery and today we suffer greatly under the slavery of sin. What is alarming is that after their deliverance, the Israelites grew tired and impatient with God, wishing they had not left Egypt. Turning to our own experience, we know that God can save us from sin, but we hear in the Gospel that some people prefer darkness to light. We are being invited to reject the darkness of sin and live in the light and truth of Jesus Christ. But just as the Israelites who had been bitten had to choose to look upon the bronze serpent to be healed, we too, in our sinfulness, must choose to look upon Jesus lifted up on the cross for our salvation.

► How do you see people in today's world preferring the darkness over the light?

► What are some things you can do that will lead you to choose the light of Christ over the darkness of sin more often?

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 150.

God loves you.

God offers his mercy and forgiveness to restore you.

Look to Jesus on the cross as a remedy for sinfulness.

Act on the Word

Good News in the News

For this activity, you will need newspapers or access to online news sources and paper and pens.

Divide the teens into small groups. Assign each group a different news source or newspaper and give them paper and pens. To begin the activity, share with the young people that it is sometimes hard to see the light of Christ shining through all of the bad news that we hear and read about every day. In this activity, they will be finding the good news that is still happening in their communities and the world. Give the young people time to search their news source for two to four articles about people doing good works. The stories don't have to be about Christians; good works can happen in non-religious contexts. We know that all goodness comes from God, but the world does not always see it that way.

Once the teens have had time to find their news stories, have each group share with the larger group what they found. End the activity by encouraging the teens to look for good news every day. It is easy to be overwhelmed by the darkness, but when we remind ourselves that good is still happening in the world, it becomes easier for us to choose the light of Christ.

Closing Prayer

Son of God,
though we sometimes close our eyes
to your light,
we long to see your glory.

Strengthen us
so that we may turn toward your light
and keep our eyes fixed on your path,
for you live and reign
with God, the Father,
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. If your parish will be celebrating the third scrutiny with those preparing for baptism at the Easter Vigil, the Year A readings may be used. The handout and session for the Year A readings are found in the appendix of this book on pages 251-254.