



Isaiah 50:4c-9a

Psalms 116:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

James 2:14-18

Mark 8:27-35



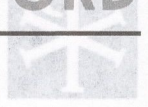
REFLECTION

Have you ever been in a situation where you went from saying the right thing to the absolute worst wrong thing? If so, you're in good company; that was Peter in today's Gospel. When asked who he thinks Jesus is, Peter articulates the truth burning in his heart—the exact perfect right answer—confessing faith that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. Leaning into the depth of Peter's faith, Jesus begins to share some difficult truths: that he will suffer and die. Instead of being willing to be present to the pain and vulnerability, Peter actually *rebukes* Jesus! We might imagine him saying, "Don't say that, nothing bad will happen!"

Have you ever been tempted by denial? When faced with pain and suffering, the temptation to escape can be intense. In Jesus' startling response, calling Peter "Satan," he rejects that enticing lie. In truth, it was going to get a lot harder before it got better. Sometimes life is hard; Jesus knows we all have crosses to bear and he carries them with us. The challenge is to deny our self-centered desire to protect our hearts. We, like Jesus, must pick up our crosses and live by faith.

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Who do you say that Jesus is? What difference does that make in your life?
- ❖ When have you been on the receiving end of genuine empathy? How have you shown this to others?



Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 15, 2024



ACTION

During times of pain and suffering, it is important that we have someone who journeys with us and supports us so that we do not despair. In turn, we can offer this same support to others. This week, reach out to someone who is going through a rough time. Sometimes even little things, like getting a bad grade, can have a major impact on someone. Whether a peer, a family member, or a friendly acquaintance, whether a big difficulty or a small one, remember that person in prayer each day. Pray for his or her strength, courage, and comfort and for the wisdom for yourself to know what to say and how to offer support. Be open to listening to the person's difficulties with love.



Check out this short video to learn about what empathy is, from a talk by Dr. Brené Brown. <https://youtu.be/1Evwgu369Jw>



September 15, 2024

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #131B

Isaiah 50:4c-9a

Psalms 116:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

James 2:14-18

Mark 8:27-35

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

The question Jesus asks at the beginning of the reading is posed to the young people today: Who do they say that Jesus is? Tied in with the response to this question is Jesus' last words in the reading: we must take up our cross and follow him. Jesus tells his disciples of what is in store for him, that he will suffer and die for his people, only to rise again. He doesn't promise an easy life, he promises the cross. As Christians we sometimes struggle to understand the significance of this promise. Ours is the way of the cross, of suffering, of service, and of new life. Yet at the core of all of that is the love of God, poured out for the world in Christ's death and resurrection. There is eternal hope and joy in spite of the sufferings we may face.

Q FOCUS: *Jesus tells us to take up our cross and follow him.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On September 15, the Church celebrates Our Lady of Sorrows. If possible, find an image of Our Lady of Sorrows and spend some time reflecting on it. In this image, Mary is usually depicted with one or seven swords piercing her heart. On her face is pain and tears. Her sorrow comes from the sufferings she experiences throughout her life in connection to the sufferings of her son, Jesus. What pain must a

mother endure to see her beloved child suffering. Yet she trusts in the promises of Jesus, and she remains at the foot of the cross. Her love, faith, and strength in times of pain are an inspiration to all Christians.

Church Teaching Connection

"Those who share in Christ's sufferings have before their eyes the Paschal Mystery of the Cross and Resurrection, in which Christ descends, if a first phase, to the ultimate limits of human weakness . . . indeed, he dies nailed to the Cross. But if at the same time in this *weakness* there is accomplished his *lifting up*, confirmed by the power of the Resurrection, then this means that the weaknesses of all human sufferings are capable of being infused with the same power of God manifested in Christ's Cross" (Pope John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, 23).

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

Mark 8:27-35

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

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

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

Jesus and his disciples set out for the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who

do you say that I am?" Peter said to him in reply, "You are the Christ." Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him.

He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and rise after three days. He spoke this openly. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. At this he turned around and, looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it."

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:

► **Who is wearing a cross necklace or has ever worn a cross necklace? What does it signify for you?**

There is a spiritual but fictional story of a young person who was told to pick up his cross and follow Jesus. As he looked at his personal cross, it seemed too big and too heavy. He took the cross and began to follow the Lord. But as time passed, the cross felt uncomfortable and awkward. As he passed other people carrying their own crosses, he asked if he could trade with others. Soon, after a few trades, the person was able to obtain a much smaller and lighter cross. Through more trades he was eventually able to get a cross as small as a necklace. Suddenly, he came to a ravine. On the other side was a beautiful land that looked like a paradise. The person asked

Jesus how he was supposed to cross this great divide. Jesus said, "Lay down the cross I gave you, and walk across it as a bridge." Unfortunately for this person, he had traded his custom-made cross for something he thought was easier.

► **What do you take away from this story?**

Sometimes we are tempted to believe that following Jesus leads to an easy life. If I am a good person, shouldn't I get good things? The truth is, life is still filled with suffering and difficulty. Jesus did not promise an easy life for his followers. Instead, as we hear in today's reading, he promises a cross.

► **If Jesus tells us to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow him, why would anyone willingly do so? Why invite suffering in?**

This focus on suffering is not to say that our lives as Christians will be miserable. God does indeed bless us and wants us to experience the joy of life in him. But the reality is that we live in a fallen world. The world we are in now is not the kingdom of God but is a world in which sin and its consequences occur. While suffering is an inevitable part of life, it is not something that we need to be afraid of. Jesus walked the path of the cross. He walks with us in ours as well.

When we choose to follow Christ, we choose to believe that we are never alone. We choose to allow our suffering to be transformed into redemption. We choose to offer it to God for the sake of others, modeling Christ's love on the cross. The truth is, we need our cross. It is through the cross we can become more like Jesus. Jesus took a symbol of torture and pain and transformed it into a symbol of a hope-filled future.

We are faced with the same question Jesus asked the disciples: Who do we say that Jesus is? If he asks this hard thing of us, to take up our crosses, what kind of a person is he? Who is Jesus who also suffers with us and for us? Who is Jesus who conquered sin and death through his resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven? Who is Jesus who longs for us to be with him in the heavenly kingdom where we will for ever sing God's praises? Let us take up our cross and follow him.

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 30.

Jesus does not promise an easy life; he promises us the cross.

The way of the cross includes suffering, but there is hope and joy because of the resurrection.

Jesus asks the question proposed to Peter to us today, "Who do you say I am?"

Act on the Word

Who Do You Say I Am?

For this activity, you will need sheets of paper, writing utensils, and a whiteboard or a large sheet of butcher paper. You may also need some Bibles.

Before the young people gather, you should brainstorm three famous people that the young people should know. On separate pieces of paper, write down each person and a list of facts about him or her. Do not share these with the teens.

At the beginning of the activity, ask for three volunteers to be the famous people. At this time, you can give each volunteer one of the fact sheets. Then split the rest of the young people into equal teams. Equip the teams with paper and pens. Their goal is to guess who the "famous person" is.

Have the first famous person stand in front of the room. Each team gets to ask the person questions, but they cannot directly ask who that person is. Allow each team to ask two or three questions or set a timer for a short amount of time. At the end of the round, each team will write down their guess as to who the famous person is.

Follow the same format for the next two famous people. After the rounds are complete, have each famous person reveal who they are. Whichever team has the right answer gets a point.

After the game, integrate the famous people into the teams. Then have the teams brainstorm different names or titles for Jesus (such as Christ or Messiah, Lord, Son of David, and so on). Ask the young people to reflect on where they heard that name or title and what it means to them. If they need help thinking of names, they can look through the Gospels.

Once the groups are finished listing names, write all the names on the board. Invite the teens to spend a few minutes reflecting on the titles of Jesus. Then each person should choose one name that resonates with him or her. Have the teens conclude the activity by writing their own prayer to Jesus using that name or title of Jesus they selected. In their prayer, the young people can ask Jesus for the grace to get to know him better and to trust in his support through the trials of life. Encourage them to use the prayer throughout the week.

Closing Prayer

*O Christ,
you call your disciples to follow you.
The path is difficult,
and we may falter.
Grant that we come to find
our strength in you,
the anointed one.
Who live and reign 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.