

Read

2 Chronicles 36:14-16,
19-23

Psalm 137: 1-2, 3, 4-5, 6

Ephesians 2:4-10

John 3:14-21

LIVING THE WORD

Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 14, 2021



REFLECTION

Upon initial reading, today's Gospel might seem surprising or even contradictory to the images of God we know. If God is all loving, why would God send God's own son to be killed? The important reality here is that the God of love shared God's self with the world. Nothing is more personal than the sharing of oneself, for it is how we come to know one another. By sharing of himself, God invites us to grow in our own understanding of and relationship with him.



ACTION

Sharing information about yourself can be difficult, as it requires a great amount of trust and vulnerability. Think about times in your own life where you had to share part of your experience with someone else. What was it like to share your story? How did you feel before you shared? How did you feel after? Did your friendship grow because of the experience? Did you learn something about yourself from your sharing? Choose one of these memories and take some time to thank the person who allowed you to share openly and honestly. If you cannot thank them in person, write a letter or journal about the experience. It is important to take opportunities to express gratitude, especially with people who allow us to truly be ourselves.

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How is God sharing himself with you when you receive the Eucharist? How do you respond to God's gift?
- ❖ How do you share God's love with other people?



March 14, 2021

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

The readings for today remind us how God has been faithful throughout salvation history. All his promises are fulfilled in the person of Jesus. Today's Gospel passage reminds us of the depth and scope of God's love for us that is made present in Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus came to save us, not to punish us for our sins. Lent gives us an opportunity to reflect on God's love and move beyond the sins of our past to live in the promise of God's love.

Q FOCUS: Remember God's faithfulness, respond in faith.

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On March 19, we celebrate the Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. St. Joseph is not mentioned frequently in the Gospel, but his presence was essential to God's plan of salvation. As the foster father of Jesus, he acted as his protector and guide. St. Joseph followed God's command and allowed God to work through his life. He is the patron saint of a happy death, since tradition holds that he was surrounded by the Blessed Virgin Mary and Jesus at the time of his death. He is also the patron saint of workers, immigrants, and fathers.

Church Teaching Connection

"Yet the word of God is a word of unbounded hope. 'God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son . . . so that through him, the world might be saved' ([John] 3:16-17). God does not give up on us! He continues to lift our eyes to a future of hope, and he promises us the strength to accomplish it. . . . God created us to live in the light, and to be light for the world around us! This is what Jesus tells us in today's Gospel" (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, March 22, 2009).

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:

► **What is your earliest memory? Why do you think that stands out to you?**

Most of us do not take the time to think about our memories. We are more concerned with what is happening now. But it is helpful to look back on our life and see where we have come from. What has happened in the past shapes who we are today.

► **How has your past shaped who you are today? What past events are most meaningful?**

Today's Gospel reading invites us into the middle of a conversation Jesus is having with Nicodemus. In the previous verses (John 3:1–13), Nicodemus acknowledges that Jesus has been sent by God. Jesus tells him that in order to enter heaven, a person must be born of the Spirit and be from God. Nicodemus does not understand—the past, being born, has already happened. How can a person be born again? This is more than just repeating history; it is physically impossible. But Jesus explains in the passage we hear today.

► **When you hear the phrase “born again,” what comes to mind? How do you understand this in relation to Baptism?**

We have new life through our Baptism, which draws us into the life of God and makes us members of the Body of Christ. We are made new creations, cleansed of our sin and saved through the sacrifice of Christ. Throughout the history of the Israelites, God had promised to send a messiah, one who would save the people. God remained faithful to his promise and sent Jesus as the way of our salvation. We know that God is faithful to us. When we look back on our lives, we see time and again how God has remained faithful, even when we might not have. The words of Jesus we hear in today's Gospel reading remind us that God loves us. So much, in fact, that he sent his beloved son, Jesus, to save us. Jesus didn't come to count our sins, but to love us and show us the way back to him. After all this time, after all this forgetting, God is still faithful.

► **How have you experienced God's faithfulness recently?**

Lent is a time to remember when we have sinned, but also to see that through the lens of God's faithfulness and love. Yes, we do not always live up to God's great calling in our lives. The Gospel reminds us that people sometimes prefer darkness to the light. However, it is never too late to turn back to God. We can reflect on our past and move forward, into the light of God's love.

► **What can we do to show God that we want to live in that light, to move beyond our sins? What concrete action can you take to show you remember God's mercy?**

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.

Throughout history, God has shown faithfulness, love, and mercy to his people.

God has not given up on us but calls us to live in the light of God's love.

We turn away from our past sins by acting for others, showing them the mercy and love of God.

Act on the Word

“Scriptory”: Depicting God’s Promise

You will need a board or a flip chart and writing materials. Before today’s activity, you will need to prepare several index cards which the young people will use in the game. See the following examples below for Bible stories to use in the game. You will also need blank notecards for the teens to use after the game.

This activity will help the young people to reflect on God’s constant love and presence throughout all of history. This is a variation on the game Pictionary based on Scripture and it emphasizes today’s Gospel message about God’s unfailing love.

It is best to have a white board or a flip chart for this game. Divide the group into two teams. Each team picks an artist who will choose a card and draw things to help their teammates guess what written on the card. The artist has sixty seconds to draw. Members of his or her team will try to guess the picture. The artist may not speak or write words. One point is awarded if the picture is named correctly. After sixty seconds, if the drawing team has not guessed the picture, the other team can take the point by guessing what the other team drew. The second team then chooses an artist and play continues.

Examples of biblical figures or events to use follow. Feel free to add others. Use them to prepare the cards before the game begins.

- ✧ God Creates the World
- ✧ Noah’s Ark
- ✧ The Tower of Babel
- ✧ Jacob Wrestling with the Angel
- ✧ Abraham Sacrificing Isaac
- ✧ The Exodus
- ✧ King David
- ✧ Jonah in the Whale
- ✧ The Nativity
- ✧ The Annunciation
- ✧ Jesus’ Baptism
- ✧ Jesus Temptation

- ✧ The Last Supper
- ✧ The Crucifixion
- ✧ The Resurrection
- ✧ The Assumption of Mary
- ✧ The Eucharist
- ✧ The Sacrament of Reconciliation
- ✧ Lent
- ✧ The Roman Catholic Church

At the end of the game, remind the young people that these people and events are reminders of God’s constant and unfailing love for each one of us. Close the activity by reflecting on how God has been faithful to the teens in their own lives. Have each teen take a note card and draw a picture or write a few sentences on how God has loved them and been faithful to them. Encourage them to place it somewhere they can see it daily, so they can pray on God’s faithfulness throughout the week.

Closing Prayer

*Lord Jesus,
the depth of love you have for us is beyond
human comprehension,
for you did not come into the world to condemn
us but rather to bring life.
Open our hearts to receive that life,
which is your free gift and not the result
of our doing.
You live and reign with God the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one 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 247-250.