

Read

Isaiah 22:19-23

138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8

Romans 11:33-36

Matthew 16:13-20

LIVING THE WORD

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 23, 2020



REFLECTION

Have you ever taken a personality test? Usually these quizzes don't quite get it right. Sure, they might come up with some of the qualities you have, but often they are so general that they could apply to anyone. The real questions aren't what a test might say about you, but what you think about yourself, what others think of you, and what God thinks of you. How do you define yourself? What are the characteristics that make you, you? Are these the things that others see in us as well? Are they God-given talents and attitudes that lead you closer to him? It is good to take time to reflect on these things because they help us to recognize ourselves as persons in relation to others. In today's Gospel, Jesus asked his disciples who he was. He gave them an opportunity to reflect on all that he had been doing and saying. He was asking the disciples to think about what his role was in their lives and in the world. Peter recognizes and declares the truth about Jesus, that he is the Son of God. Have you taken time to reflect on who Jesus is in your life in order that you might be able to say the same thing Peter said?

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How would you answer Jesus if he asked you who he was?
- ❖ Do you think Peter knew what he was saying when he answered Jesus?



ACTION

Divide a sheet of paper into three sections and make three lists. First, make a list of things you think make you unique, things that exemplify your identity in the world that God has created. Then make a list of things others think make you unique. Finally, make a list of characteristics that you think God would want to have you share with the world. We are always in relationship with others and when we recognize the talents and gifts God has given us, we are better able to share them with others. Decide how you can share your unique talents with your community and plan to do so this week.





August 23, 2020

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #121A

Isaiah 22:19-23

Psalms 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8

Romans 11:33-36

Matthew 16:13-20

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, Jesus asks the disciples what others think of him. He is not searching for a compliment; rather, he is inviting the disciples to take a closer look at who he is and what he was sent to do. They recognize him for who he truly is, as evidenced by Peter's declaration. This is the Christ, the Messiah, God's Son. Because of response, Peter is given the great responsibility of the "keys to the kingdom of heaven." We understand this passage to refer to the establishment of the papacy. We, too, are given a responsibility after declaring our faith in Jesus; to transform our lives to reflect what Jesus calls us to be.

Q FOCUS: *To recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God and savior of the world.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week, we remember both St. Monica (August 27) and her son, St. Augustine (August 28) who lived in the fourth and fifth centuries. St. Monica was a devout woman and prayed diligently for her son's conversion to Christianity. She was persistent in her prayer and in her evangelization of her son. Eventually, St. Monica's prayers were answered, and St. Augustine's eyes were opened to the truth of God's grace and mercy. After his Baptism into the faith, he became a bishop and theologian in the early Church. Because many of his writings survive still today, he is a very influential figure in theology. St. Augustine is recognized as a Doctor of the Church.

(Doctor of the Church is a title given to some saints who, through their writings and actions, greatly contributed to the Church's understanding of God and humanity's relationship with him.)

Church Teaching Connection

"In order to ensure that the people of God would have pastors and would enjoy continual growth, Christ the Lord set up in his church a variety of offices whose aim is the good of the whole body. Ministers invested with a sacred power, are at the service of their brothers and sisters, so that all who belong to the people of God and therefore enjoy true [C]hristian dignity may attain to salvation through their free, combined and well-ordered efforts in pursuit of a common goal" (*Lumen gentium*, 18).

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 16:13-20

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 went into the region of Caesarea Philippi and he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him

in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

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 do you say that Jesus is?

Jesus was so many things to so many people: a son, a friend, a teacher, a rabbi, and a prophet. He was these things and more; he was fully divine and fully human. He is the Son of God who came to save humanity by becoming like us and offering himself to the Father. Throughout his ministry on earth, Jesus gradually revealed these truths about himself to others. In today's Gospel, we hear his curiosity over what people thought of him. We all know how that feels. We wonder if someone likes us, is mad at

us, or wants to spend time with us. We live our lives, sometimes, in a cloud of worry when it comes to others' impressions of us. Just like us, Jesus is happy to hear that his friends see him for who he truly is—the Christ, the Son of the living God.

► Do you find yourself caught up in what others think of you?

► Who do you want your friends to see when they look at you?

Jesus is so pleased with Simon Peter's answer that he rewards him with a special duty. Simon's name will be changed to Peter (which is derived from the Greek word for “rock,” *petra*). Jesus tells Peter that he is a rock and that our Church will be built on that rock. We believe that this passage is what establishes the hierarchy of our Church, with the pope as the temporal (or worldly) leader of the Catholic Church. We believe that Peter was the first pope. He helped to establish the faith of our Catholic Church for generations to come.

The trajectory of Peter's life is dramatically changed by his encounters with Jesus and his recognition that Jesus is the Christ. Instead of living his life as a fisherman, he becomes a great figure in the early Church and shares the Good News with all he meets. All our lives are changed by our encounter with Jesus. We meet him in the sacraments and the liturgy, in other people, in creation. Jesus meets us where we are and draws us closer to him.

► How has your life changed by your encounter with Christ and your recognition of him as the Messiah?

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 14.

How do people learn about who Jesus truly is?

Peter is considered our first pope. Why is the pope important to our Church?

Our lives are transformed when we encounter Jesus and recognize him as the Son of God.

Act on the Word

Who Are You?

You will need loose-leaf paper or journals for this activity. You might also want to have some quiet, reflective music.

In this activity, the young people will have an opportunity to examine their lives in relation to Christ. After distributing the paper, provide the teens with the following questions as prompts to guide their journaling. Encourage them to be honest with themselves in their reflection, since this will not be shared with the group. Allow them several minutes to respond to these questions. You can play some quiet music while they journal.

- ✧ Who is Christ to you? Describe your relationship with Jesus, his characteristics, and what role he has in your life.

- ✧ How has your relationship with Jesus influenced who you are today? What choices has it affected in your life up to this point?
- ✧ How might your continual encounter with Jesus in the sacraments and in the Scripture affect your future? How might it shape your path in high school, at a job, in college, or in your relationships?
- ✧ What can you do to grow in your relationship with Christ now and in the future?

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
Son of the living God, increase our faith,
until our knowledge of you echoes
in everything we say and everything we do.
You 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.