

Read

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

Psalm 96:1, 3, 4-5,
7-8, 9-10

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b

Matthew 22:15-21

LIVING THE WORD

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 18, 2020



REFLECTION

How do you introduce yourself to others? Usually, we include some information about what we do and where we are from. Is that the whole of our identity? Of course not! What we do and where we are from are just two of many ways that we can describe ourselves. All of these identifying factors ("I'm from . . .," "I play . . .," "I'm . . . years old," etc.) complement each of other to create the whole of our identity. We can be more than one thing at one time. The Pharisees in today's Gospel were trying to trick Jesus asking him to choose only one thing to be—a good citizen or a good believer. However, Jesus knows that they are trying to trap him and so he reminds them that God is the source of our life and of everything on earth. Yes, we have to do worldly things (like pay taxes or go to school and follow the rules there), but we do them in light of our identity as Christians.



ACTION

This week, think about what shapes your identity. What makes you, you? You can search for the meaning of your name on the web or ask your parents about they chose the name you have. Ask your family members and friends who you are to them. (You might want to return the favor and tell them how they play a role in shaping your identity, too!) Consider the things you are involved with at school and church. How do they influence your choices?



*"I keep the Lord always
before me; with him at
my right hand, I shall never
be shaken."*

—Psalm 16:8



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What makes you unique?
- ❖ How does your identity as a Christian shape your daily life?



October 18, 2020

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #145A

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

Psalm 96:1, 3, 4-5, 7-8, 9-10

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b

Matthew 22:15-21

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 Sunday, the Pharisees intend to trick Jesus into saying something or doing something that might get him arrested. Jesus is aware that the Pharisees are trying to ensnare him, and so he figures out a way to offer a compromise in his answer. This Gospel passage helps us understand that we must balance the cares and concerns of this world with our faith. As Jesus reminds the Pharisees, we must respond with gratitude to the gifts God has given us. God has made all things, even the society in which we live.

Q FOCUS: *While we live in this world, we also live in anticipation of the Kingdom of God.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On October 22, we remember the life and work of St. John Paul II. St. John Paul II was elected pope in 1978 and served as pope until his death in 2005. He grew up in Poland and brought a unique outlook to the papacy, which had been heavily influenced by Italian bishops for centuries. Pope John Paul II traveled to many countries and reached out to Catholics, Christians, and non-Christians all over the world. He also began World Youth Day to help young people be inspired by their faith and act as witnesses of Christ in their communities.

Church Teaching Connection

"If by the autonomy of earthly affairs is meant the gradual discovery, utilization and ordering of the laws and values of matter and society, then the demand for autonomy is perfectly in order: it is at once the claim of humankind today and the desire of the creator. By the very nature of creation, material being is endowed with its own stability, truth and excellence, its own order and laws. . . . However, if by the term 'the autonomy of [earthly] affairs' is meant that material being does not depend on God and that humanity can use it as if it had no relation to its creator, then the falsity of such a claim will be obvious to anyone who believes in God" (*Gaudium et spes*, 36).

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 22:15-21

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.

The Pharisees went off and plotted how they might entrap Jesus in speech. They sent their disciples to him, with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are not concerned with anyone's opinion, for you do

not regard a person's status. Tell us, then, what is your opinion: Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?" Knowing their malice, Jesus said, "Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? Show me the coin that pays the census tax." Then they handed him the Roman coin. He said to them, "Whose image is this and whose inscription?" They replied, "Caesar's." At that he said to them, "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to 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:

There are times in our lives when we try to trick someone or trap them into saying something or doing something that they do not want to do. Or maybe you have felt tricked into doing something or giving an answer that you know was not right or kind. Feeling trapped is a terrible feeling. In this Gospel passage, the Pharisees are trying to trick Jesus into giving the wrong answer or doing the wrong thing so that they can have him arrested.

► Has there been a time in your life when you have felt threatened by another person because you think he or she is smarter or more talented, athletic, or popular? Have you ever wanted some harm or difficulty to come their way?

If so, then you can relate to the Pharisees. In this story, the Pharisees wanted to harm Jesus; they wanted to trap him and get him into trouble. Most likely, they wanted to do this because they were threatened by Jesus. Jesus was performing miracles, had many followers, and was believed to be God's Son. The Pharisees could not top that! So they set out to hurt him by getting Jesus into trouble.

► Have you ever felt tricked or trapped by someone else? What was the result?

The Pharisees want Jesus to admit that people should not be paying taxes to Caesar because they know that if he said not to pay taxes, then Jesus would be in trouble with the government authorities. If he said that it is lawful to pay the tax, however, then he will be breaking the second commandment because the Pharisees think that paying the tax to Caesar is likened to worshipping another god. Roman emperors (and many leaders following) believed that they were imbued with a kind of divinity.

Jesus surprises them all- first, he calls them hypocrites, knowing that the Pharisees intend to trick him. But he also offers a compromise. Yes, the people of his time must pay the tax because it is part of the temporal world; it is a requirement of the society in which they live, and an expectation of people who must live alongside each other and grow in community. However, the people must also render to God what is God's. We show our gratitude to God for creating us and giving us many gifts to share with the world. We also engage in prayer and acts of service as a way to render to God what is God's. Jesus admits that we are a people who must abide by human expectations and standards but that we also are part of God's Kingdom and so must turn our eyes and our hearts toward that Kingdom as well.

► Have you ever felt as though the culture or society is pulling you one way and your faith and its teachings are pulling you another way? How do you reconcile this feeling?

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 46.

The Pharisees felt threatened by Jesus, his teachings, and his followers because he did not conform to their idea of a religious figure.

We often feel threatened by those we do not understand.

We must balance our involvement in the world with our identity as Christians.

Act on the Word

Responding to the World with Faith

Bring in some recent newspapers, magazines, or allow the students use of smartphones and tablets during class.

Divide the teens into small groups of three or four people. Using recent newspapers or access to online publications, instruct the groups to find articles that touch on one of the principles of Catholic social teaching. (For more information on the seven principles of Catholic social teaching, visit <https://www.crs.org/resource-center/CST-101>.) These principles include:

- ✧ Life and Dignity of the Human Person
- ✧ Solidarity
- ✧ Care for God's Creation

- ✧ Call to Family, Community, and Participation
- ✧ Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- ✧ Rights and Responsibilities
- ✧ Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers

Have them discuss within their group how the principle and article demonstrate our faith. Invite each group to present the principle and article to the class. Engage the young people in a conversation about how temporal/worldly issues are informed by our faith. Where are there differences between our faith and the world's reaction? How can our faith inspire us to respond to those worldly issues? Discuss with the teens ways in which our faith can help alleviate the suffering or difficulty exhibited in the news stories that they found.

Closing Prayer

*Lord our God,
fill us with your wisdom, so that we may be
good citizens of this world and never forget
that our true citizenship is in heaven.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
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.