



THE VIETNAMESE EUCHARISTIC YOUTH MOVEMENT IN THE U.S.A.

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Weekly Gospel Lessons

NAME _____

TEAM _____

Live The Eucharistic Day



TNTT WEEKLY SCRIPTURE LESSON STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEM

STUDENT

STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Read the weekly scripture lesson at home before going to TNTT and/or church
2. Participate and share in the bible sharing session
3. Practice the virtue from the **Live It!** section daily

YOUTH LEADER

YOUTH-LEADER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Prepare a weekly scripture lesson with prayer
2. Share and connect the Gospel to daily life
3. Encourage students to do homework and practice the weekly virtue

PARENT

PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Read the weekly scripture lesson with your child
2. Share and connect the Gospel to family life
3. Help, pray, and remind your child to practice the virtue from the **Live It!** section

Weekly
Gospel
Lessons

Lesson Journal

Date	Week/Page	Lesson	Virtue to Practice	Assignments
	18th Sunday in Ord. — C Page 2	Jesus' Teaching on Greed	Detachment	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	19th Sunday in Ord. — C Page 4	Jesus' Warning of being Vigilant and Faithful Servants	Reliability	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	20th Sunday in Ord. — C Page 6	Jesus: A Cause of Division	Harmonious	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	21st Sunday in Ord. — C Page 8	Jesus' Teaching on Entering Through the Narrow Door	Tolerance	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	22nd Sunday in Ord. — C Page 10	Jesus' Teaching on Conduct of Invited Guests and Hosts	Honor	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	23rd Sunday in Ord. — C Page 12	Being Jesus' Disciple	Authenticity	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	24th Sunday in Ord. — C Page 14	Jesus' Teaching on Repentance	Joyfulness	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	25th Sunday in Ord. — C Page 16	Jesus' Parable of the Dishonest Steward	Honesty	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	26th Sunday in Ord. — C Page 18	Jesus' Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus	Thoughtfulness	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	27th Sunday in Ord. — C Page 20	Jesus' Teaching on Faith	Faith	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	28th Sunday in Ord. — C Page 22	Jesus Healed the Ten Lepers	Gratitude	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	29th Sunday in Ord. — C Page 24	Jesus' Parable of the Persistent Widow	Perseverance	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	30th Sunday in Ord. — C Page 26	Jesus' Parable of Two Men Praying in the Temple	Humility	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	31st Sunday in Ord. — C Page 28	Jesus and Zacchaeus the Tax Collector	Encouragement	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	32nd Sunday in Ord. — C Page 30	Jesus' Teaching on Resurrection	Open to Truth	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	33rd Sunday in Ord. — C Page 32	Persecution Because of Jesus	Peace	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	Christ the King — C Page 34	Jesus , the King of Mercy	Accountability	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	1st Sunday of Advent — A Page 36	The Coming of Jesus	Preparedness	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	2nd Sunday of Advent — A Page 38	Prepare the Way for Jesus	Repentance	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	3rd Sunday of Advent — A Page 40	Jesus' Testimony to John	Evangelical	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	4th Sunday of Advent — A Page 42	The Birth of Jesus	Righteousness	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	Nativity of the Lord — A Page 44	Jesus , the Word, Became Flesh	Love	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	The Holy Family — A Page 46	The Holy Family of Jesus , Mary and Joseph	Obedience	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	Mary, Mother of God — A Page 48	Mary, Mother of Jesus	Peacefulness	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	Epiphany of the Lord — A Page 50	Follow Jesus' Star	Joyfulness	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	Baptism of the Lord — A Page 52	The Baptism of Jesus	Duty	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	2nd Sunday in Ord. — A Page 54	John's Testimony to Jesus	Witness	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	3rd Sunday in Ord. — A Page 56	Jesus' Ministry	Commitment	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	4th Sunday in Ord. — A Page 58	Jesus Proclaims God's Blessings	Suffering	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue

Lesson Journal

Date	Week/Page	Lesson	Virtue to Practice	Assignments
	5th Sunday in Ord. — A Page 60	Become Salt and Light for Jesus	Role Model	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	6th Sunday in Ord. — A Page 62	Jesus' Teaching About The Law	Truthfulness	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	7th Sunday in Ord. — A Page 64	Jesus' Teaching About Loving Enemies	Perfection	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	8th Sunday in Ord. — A Page 66	Jesus' Teaching About Loyalty to God	Loyalty	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	9th Sunday in Ord. — A Page 68	Listening and Acting on Jesus' Teaching	Prudence	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	1st Sunday of Lent — A Page 70	The Temptation of Jesus	Perseverance	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	2nd Sunday of Lent — A Page 72	The Transfiguration of Jesus	Obedience	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	3rd Sunday of Lent — A Page 74	Jesus is the source of living water	Enthusiasm	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	4th Sunday of Lent — A Page 76	Jesus cured the blind	Trust	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	5th Sunday of Lent — A Page 78	Jesus raised Lazarus	Caring	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	Palm/Passion Sunday — A Page 80	The Passion of Christ	Loyalty	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	Easter Sunday — A Page 82	Jesus Rises from the Death	Belief	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	2nd Sunday of Easter—A Page 84	Jesus Strengthened the Faith of Thomas	Faith	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	3rd Sunday of Easter—A Page 86	Jesus on the Road to Emmaus	Understanding	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	4th Sunday of Easter—A Page 88	Jesus is the Good Shepherd	Recognition	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	5th Sunday of Easter—A Page 90	Who is Jesus ?	Authenticity	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	6th Sunday of Easter—A Page 92	If you love Jesus ...	Responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	Ascension of the Lord — A Page 94	The Ascension of Jesus	Discipleship	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	Pentecost Sunday — A Page 96	Jesus' Disciples Received the Holy Spirit	Openness	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	Most Holy Trinity — A Page 98	Believe in the name of Jesus	Purposefulness	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	Most Holy Body & Blood—A Page 100	Jesus is the Living Bread	Thankfulness	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	10th Sunday in Ord. — A Page 102	With Hope, Matthew Follows Jesus	Hope	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	11th Sunday in Ord. — A Page 104	The compassion of Jesus	Sharing	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	12th Sunday in Ord. — A Page 106	Acknowledge Jesus	Courage	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	13th Sunday in Ord. — A Page 108	Conditions and Rewards for Jesus' Disciples	Detachment	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	14th Sunday in Ord. — A Page 110	The Gentle Mastery of Jesus	Gentleness	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	15th Sunday in Ord. — A Page 112	Jesus' Parable of the Sower	Enthusiasm	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	16th Sunday in Ord. — A Page 114	Jesus' Parable of the Weeds	Fairness	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue
	17th Sunday in Ord. — A Page 116	Jesus' Parable of the Kingdom of Heaven	Wisdom	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the lesson <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework/Practice virtue

JESUS' TEACHING ON GREED

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me." He replied to him, "Friend, who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator?" Then he said to the crowd, "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions."

Then he told them a parable.

"There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest. He asked himself, 'What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest?' And he said, 'This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods and I shall say to myself, "Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!" But God said to him, 'You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?' Thus will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God."



I. EXPLORE IT!

In today's Gospel, Jesus told the crowd a parable of a rich man whose farm produced a very large crop. Because he had no more space to store his harvest, he wanted to tear down his old barns and build bigger ones. The rich man thought to himself that because of the abundant

amount of crops he stored, he will be very happy. However, Jesus warned the crowd that materialistic things will not buy them eternal happiness. Via this parable, Jesus teaches us that rich and meaningful life cannot be drawn out of an abundance of material possessions.

2. CONNECT IT!

Think of a time you desperately wanted something after you saw its cool online ad or heard all of your friends talking about it. It could have been a new technology, a new video game, or the most popular shoes. Then months passed, a new gadget comes out and the shoes that you begged your parents for are no longer in style. This whole cycle continues and you end up with a whole collection of things. Things that you thought were “necessary”.

All the things that we use money to buy surely only brings us temporary happiness. We are always hungry for something that satisfies us longer and deeper than just material things.

3. REFLECT IT!

3.

Why do you think Jesus called the rich man in the parable a fool? What should he have done with all of his possessions?

Jesus teaches us that life does not consist of possessions. So don't store up treasures here on earth. Instead, store your spiritual treasures in Heaven by acts of love towards others, by acts of charity, and by goodness and compassion towards our neighbors. In your opinion, what are some ways of accumulating treasures in Heaven?

4. LIVE IT! [DETACHMENT]

Detachment is the act of separating or letting go of something.

Spiritual detachment is a process that frees us from whatever interferes with our spiritual growth. It is when you learn to make the will of God the most important thing in your life, and your own will, ego, and pleasure the least important.

For this week, try to give up social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc...). In addition, think of one thing that you can start doing in your life that help you store your heavenly treasures.

5. REMEMBER IT!

**“TAKE CARE TO GUARD AGAINST ALL GREED, FOR THOUGH ONE MAY BE RICH, ONE’S LIFE DOES NOT CONSIST OF POSSESSIONS.”
(LUKE 12:15)**

6. PRAY IT!

Dear Jesus,

Please help us to detach from things that could prevent us from fully living in You. Amen.



JESUS'

Warning of Being Vigilant and Faithful Servants

WEEK C - 019

Luke 12:32-48

Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

"Gird your loins and light your lamps and be like servants who await their master's return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them. And should he come in the second or third watch and find them prepared in this way, blessed are those servants. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour when the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

Then Peter said, "Lord, is this parable meant for us or for

everyone?" And the Lord replied, "Who, then, is the faithful and prudent steward whom the master will put in charge of his servants to distribute the food allowance at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master on arrival finds doing so. Truly, I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his property. But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, to eat and drink and get drunk, then that servant's master will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour and will punish him severely and assign him a place with the unfaithful.

That servant who knew his master's will but did not make preparations nor act in accord with his will shall be beaten severely; and the servant who was ignorant of his master's will but acted in a way deserving of a severe beating shall be beaten only lightly. Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.

1. Explore It!

In today's Gospel, Jesus shares three short parables to remind His disciples to always be prepared for the coming of the Son of Man. The wedding banquet promises blessings to the watchful, the coming of a thief warns of judgment for those who are not prepared, and the faithful and unfaithful slave promises blessings to those who work when the master returns and punishment for those who are not prepared for his return.



2. Connect It!

In our daily life, it can be easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of school, family, extra curricular clubs, and VEYM. It can be easy to be careless about our faith and relationship with Christ, not realizing we are drifting further away from Him. Just like how we prepare for an upcoming test, how do you prepare to meet Jesus? In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds you that the relationship between you and Christ requires constant work, attention, and preparation. As His disciples, we should always strive to become closer to Christ and prepare for the day we meet Him in heaven.

4. Live It! [RELIABILITY]

RELIABILITY is the quality of being trustworthy or of performing consistently well.

Reliability means that others see you as a responsible person and that they can depend on you. It means that another person does not need to worry about checking on you because they are sure you will do your best at the task. In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds us that those who are reliable and prepared for His coming will be blessed. In what ways have you prepared for Jesus' calling in your life? This week, spend some time to pray, go to confession, or attend Mass to prepare your heart and soul to receive Jesus into your life.

3. Reflect It!

If Jesus were to appear in front of you right now, how prepared would you be to meet Him? Like the unfaithful servant who became distracted by material possessions, what things in your life keep you away from your preparations for Jesus' coming? Alternatively, what things can you change in your life to better prepare your heart to accept Christ?

5. Remember It!

*"Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival."
(Luke 12:37)*

6. Pray It!

Lord Jesus, keep me vigilant and committed in doing Your most Holy will. Guide me away from a life of complacency and towards a life that is actively seeking You and working to become closer to You. May I become more prepared each day to meet You through my thoughts, words, and actions.
Amen.

Jesus: A Cause of Division

Week C - 020
LUKE 12:49-53

Jesus said to His disciples: "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three; a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."



1. Explore It!

Jesus shocked His disciples when He declared that He would cast fire and caused division rather than peace on earth. What is this "fire" that Jesus mentioned in the reading? The Bible mentions "fire" many times in reference to God: His actions in the world, and in the lives of the people. Often times, God manifests His presence by the use of fire to show He is almighty and powerful. We can envision this manifestation through Moses' encounter with God in the burning bush (Exodus 3:2). The image of the fire was used to symbolize God's glory, His holiness, righteous judgment, and His wrath against sin. Consequently, to represent the kingdom of God for the people to follow Him.

His word of "fire" represents the kingdom of God and was meant to help people choose to follow God or not. Jesus also states that even family loyalties would be challenged on the basis of whether people accepted the kingdom of God or not. The love of God compels us to choose who will be first in our lives. To place any relationship above God is a form of idolatry. Jesus challenges His disciples to examine who do they love first and above all else. A true disciple loves God above all else and is willing to forsake everything else for Jesus Christ. It is possible that family and friends can become our enemies if the thought of them keeps us from doing what we know God wants us to do. Does the love of Jesus Christ compel you to put God first in all you do (2 Corinthians 5:14)?

2. Connect It!

In our life, we must love and live like Jesus Christ. He gave up His place with God, chose to be born a human, and become a servant. And when He was living as a man, He humbled Himself by being fully obedient to God. He obeyed even when that caused Him to die on a cross. As VEYM member, we are called to know Jesus, to love and to serve Him. We are called to bring people closer to the Jesus Christ by being a servant to those around us.

4. Live It!

[Harmonious]

Living in unity while embracing diversity.

I challenge each one of you to make a choice to follow Jesus Christ with your action in your daily life. It could be as simple as doing a sign of a cross before you eat in public without worrying that people will make fun of you. We will share next week:

- Stand for those when you see people are being bullied.
- Visit those who are in need.

6. Pray It!

Lord, may Your love consumes me and transform my life that I may truly desire nothing more than life with You. Allow me to live harmoniously with You by learning and sharing all that is good in Your name. Make me strong in love and fidelity that nothing may hinder me from doing Your will. Amen.

3. Reflect It!

In our daily life, there are so many decisions we have to make and have we ever made a decision that is bad for us? There are many examples of making choices: which restaurants we like best, what clothes to wear to attract the most attention, how we select our cars to show off the best features. So what about Jesus? Have we ever made a decision to follow Jesus? Have we ever shown our love through our actions? As a VEYM member, we are called to follow Him by denying all sins and love Him with everything we have. Remember the four mottos of Thiếu Nhi Thánh Thể (Cầu nguyện, Rước lễ, Hy sinh, Làm tông đồ), we are called to live by these four mottos throughout our daily life to show how much love Jesus.

5. Remember It!

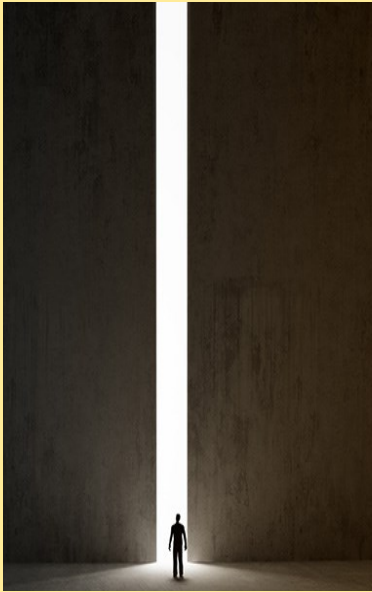
**"I HAVE COME TO SET THE EARTH
ON FIRE, AND HOW I WISH IT WERE
ALREADY BLAZING!"**

(LUKE 12:49)

JESUS' TEACHING ON ENTERING THROUGH THE NARROW DOOR

WEEK C-021

LUKE 13:22-30



Jesus passed through towns and villages, teaching as he went and making his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" He answered them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough. After the master of the house has arisen and locked the door, then will you stand outside knocking and saying, 'Lord, open the door for us.' He will say to you in reply, 'I do not know where you are from. And you will say, 'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.' Then he will say to you, 'I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers!' And there will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves cast out. And people will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at table in the kingdom of God. For behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

1. Explore It!

As Jesus was making His way to Jerusalem, He made stops to spread the Good News of the Lord and taught of the salvation that was to come. As He was teaching, someone from the crowd asked Him, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" Jesus tells the crowd that salvation is not a wide, open door; rather He advised them to, "Strive to enter through the narrow door." People throughout all of the time and from all nations will be part of the Kingdom of God, but the salvation given freely to us by God is something we must strive to obtain.



2. Connect It!

Usain Bolt's focus of life is winning the gold medal and furthermore being the best of the best. Everything he does is controlled by his goal of winning. He doesn't eat anything unhealthy because it might hinder his performance. He doesn't stay up late the night before because he wants to be well-rested, ready to give his best effort at all times.

This is the kind of attitude we should have towards our own salvation according to Jesus. This mindset of constantly striving and thriving is something that should govern everything we do. It should determine how we spend our time, our money, our leisure time, etc.



We must strive to enter the narrow door. It's not a great, big, wide door we can freely wander through without thought. We must be earnest in our efforts in making sure that Christ alone is our hope of salvation.

3. Reflect It!

"Strive to enter the narrow door." How often in life have you procrastinated on homework or big projects? It is incredibly easy to wait until the last minute, but what will you do when it comes to your salvation? When Jesus talks about the narrow door, He is telling us that the journey to salvation is not easy and cannot be attained by everyone. You must go through the door one at a time. You must take your time and position yourself in a way to successfully cross the door. Similarly, achieving salvation will not be easy, but it will be rewarding because of the work you have put into it. The same effort you put into completing a homework assignment or class project is exactly what Jesus asks you to do when seeking salvation and living out a Christian life.

4. Live It! [TOLERANCE]:

the capacity to endure pain or hardship.

To be able to strive, we must have the tolerance to face any hardship along our journey to salvation. When you feel like you need the strength to endure any hardship within this week, say a short prayer and ask God to give you the tolerance to overcome this milestone.

5. Remember It!

*"Strive to enter through
the narrow door"*

(Luke 13:24)

6. Pray It!

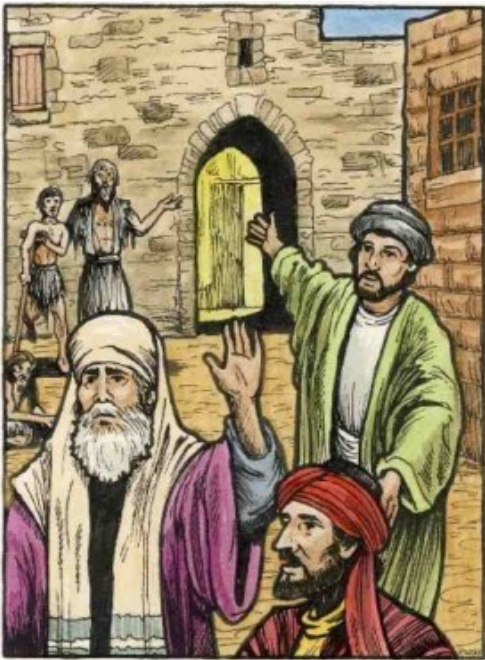
Dear Lord,
Please let this Scripture open my eyes. Let me deliberately and consistently try to strive to be closer to You, Jesus.
Amen.



Jesus' Teaching on Conduct of Invited Guests & Hosts

WEEK C - 022

LUKE 14:1,7-14



On a Sabbath Jesus went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him carefully.

He told a parable to those who had been invited, noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table. "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not recline at table in the place of honor. A more distinguished guest than you may have been invited by him, and the host who invited both of you may approach you and say, 'Give your place to this man,' and then you would proceed with embarrassment to take the lowest place. Rather, when you are invited, go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he may say, 'My friend, move up to a higher position.' Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table. For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Then he said to the host who invited him, "When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather,

when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

1. Explore It!

In this Gospel, the Pharisees invited Jesus to dine at their place in order for them to observe Him. When seeing how all the invited guests all seated themselves in the seats of honor, He told them a parable of how it is better to be humble and take the lowest seats, because there might be a more distinguish guest; and if needed, they will be invited to the more honored seats from the lower seats. This alludes to how we need to be humble and charitable in order to be seated at the Heavenly Feast.

2. Connect It!

We live in an individualistic and egocentric culture. Everything is about *me*, the spotlight and attention are always for *me*... the first place or seat of honor is for *me...me, me, me*... basically, the universe revolves around *me!* Many times there is a sense of entitlement or even narcissism. Many times we don't realize it, but having this sense of entitlement is sort of a perversion of "self-love," which is poisonous. It leads to the mindset of thinking that other people are responsible for our own happiness, that other people need to please us and give

us attention: when one doesn't receive this receive this attention, one would result in pettiness and tantrums—judging other people. One forgets that "to the only God, our savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, power, and authority from ages past, now, and for ages to come. Amen" (Jude 1:25).

4. Live It! [Honor]

HONOR — the evaluation of a person's trustworthiness and social status based on that individual's integrity and character.

This week, pray to other peers, for they are being with you at some point in your life, to thank God's for the gift of having your peers surround you. Take a stepping stone and give generously to the poor who are not fortune enough in this society.



3. Reflect It!

Each and every one of us, to some degree, enjoy being valued and praised by others and society. However, that is only the glory and fame of this earthly world. How many among us desire also for eternal glory with God? In order to receive and share in God's eternal glory, what must one do?

5. Remember It!

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted”

(Luke 14:11)

6. Pray It!

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
All I have and call my own.

You have given all to me..
To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours: do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me. Amen.

(Suscipe Prayer, St Ignatius of Loyola)

Being Jesus' Disciple

Luke 14:25-33

Great crowds were traveling with Jesus, and he turned and addressed them, "If any one comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him and say, 'This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.' Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether with ten thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops? But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms. In the same way, every one of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple."



1. Explore It!

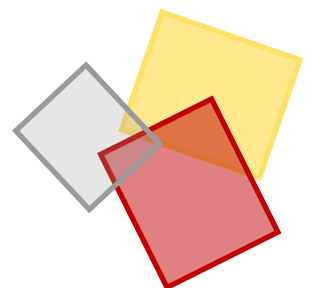
Today's Gospel tells us about the cost of being Jesus' disciple. Jesus laid out two costs: family and possessions.

Family: When Jesus uses the word "hate", he does not mean to literally hate your family, or to physically separate yourselves from them; rather, he means it in a spiritual

way. In order to be Jesus' disciple, you must be able to put God first.

Possessions: Jesus uses the tower building and king planning parables to have you think about the costs behind each action. You must think about the resources that go into building a tower before constructing it, and you must think about the type of strategy to implement in order to

win a battle against an army twice your size. In the same way, Jesus wants you to think hard about discipleship before making a decision. Can you renounce everything you have and put God first and above all things?



We all have family and possessions that we look after. But are these material things really important? How do we prioritize them? In the Gospel today, Jesus said that anyone who wants to follow Him must leave everything behind and put God above all things. In today's life, you are not following Jesus the same way the disciples did, but you can bring Jesus to other people. No matter what your struggles, Jesus is always present around you and everyone else around you.

2. Connect It!

4. Live It! [AUTHENTICITY]

Being **[authentic]** is being real or genuine.

Are you being authentic in your journey as Jesus' disciple? Do you go to mass because you are told to, or do you actually try to live a prayerful life? This week, try putting Jesus first; always think about Him first before your family or friends. Practice the virtue of authenticity to become a true disciple.

6. Pray It!

Dear Lord, please help me to understand the benefits of being your disciple. Help me to be able to put You first in life, so that You can work through me and so I can bring You to people around me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

3. Reflect It!

When we put God first in life, He works through us. He will do things to you and people around you in ways that we can't imagine. Whether He helps you get the grade you want or helps a friend of yours go through life's difficulties, His grace can be seen in everything around us. Nothing happens without Him permitting it. Think of the ways Jesus touches your daily life. How can you put Him above all things?



5. Remember It!

"WHOEVER DOES NOT CARRY HIS OWN CROSS AND COME AFTER ME CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE." (LUKE 14:27)



JESUS' TEACHING ON REPENTANCE

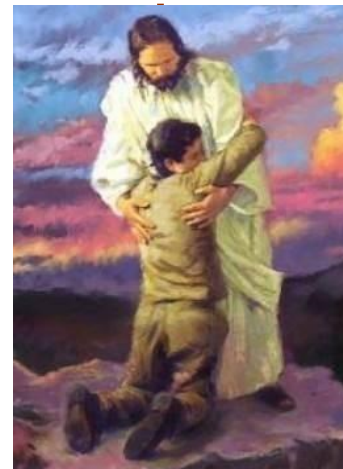
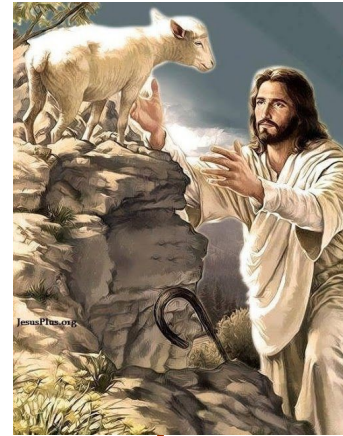
Luke 15:1-32

The tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to him, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." So to them he addressed this parable. "What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance."

"Or what woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it? And when she does find it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.' In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Then he said, "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him

any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."' So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fatted calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began. Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fatted calf because he has him back safe and sound.' He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fatted calf.' He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'"



1. EXPLORE IT!

Jesus habitually ministered to the sinners which bothered the Pharisees. In keeping in line with His character, Jesus told three parables to show why He dined with outcasts: The Parable of the Lost Sheep, Parable of the Lost Coin, and the Parable of the Prodigal Son. In these parables, He reveals to us that God doesn't only mercifully forgive sinners but also rejoices when sinners repent. He invites us to share in God's joy of opening our hearts to welcome our brothers and sisters back to the way of justice and truth.

2. CONNECT IT!

In the Gospel, the sheep, the coin and the younger brother all had something in common: they were all lost. We too, as human beings, are often "lost" and wander off the path when we fall into sin and bad habits. However, no matter how "lost" we may be, our Loving Father in Heaven is always looking for us. He is always present and speaks to us, whether it be through our conscience, our Holy Mother, the Church, parents, friends, etc. The tangible signs of His love and mercy are present with us in the Sacraments, such as the Reconciliation where one is able to make amends with God, and the Eucharist, where we are able to unite ourselves with Our Divine Father.

4. LIVE IT! [JOYFULNESS]

feeling, causing, or showing great happiness

Our biggest source joy should be from the fact that each one of us is a beloved child of God. Remind yourself that you are a beloved child of God, and that we are called to imitate God and be the presence of God to others. In the City of God, St. Augustine reminds us that God is our source of true joy and happiness and that nothing of this world can give us true and eternal happiness.

Every day this week, take a moment to recognize the joy of God's presence in your life. He can take many forms and shapes, such as a simple "thank you" from a friend for picking up something they dropped on the floor, but in all of them, He is waiting for us to return to Him and encounter Him. Write about these moments each day and at the end of the week reflect on all the joyful encounters you have with Christ in your life.

6. PRAY IT!

"Father, we thank you for Your loving kindness. We thank you that we can come to You whenever we have a problem and that You will always be there for us. We know that You are quick to forgive us when we sin and will always welcome us back when we return to You. Amen."

3. REFLECT IT!

Focusing on the Parable of the Lost Son, we see the younger brother mistreating his father by demanding a share of property from his Father; it is as if he wished that his father was dead. He then took the money and led a sinful life. How many times in our own life we have turned our backs to God, betrayed His love for us, and continued down the path of sin as if God was not present?

The older brother in the parable, although he appears righteous in his outward actions, is far from righteous. The issue here lies in the matters of the older brother's heart and intentions. He does not do good deeds for the sake of goodness and love of his Father but does it with a heart filled with expectations of merit and reward. He doesn't carry out his deeds out of love for his Father, but out of hope of getting the better reward from his father. He then gets jealous when his brother is joyously welcomed back home. How often do we find ourselves like the older brother, doing the right things but with bad intentions, doing things to gain benefits rather than for the sake of righteousness and love of God?

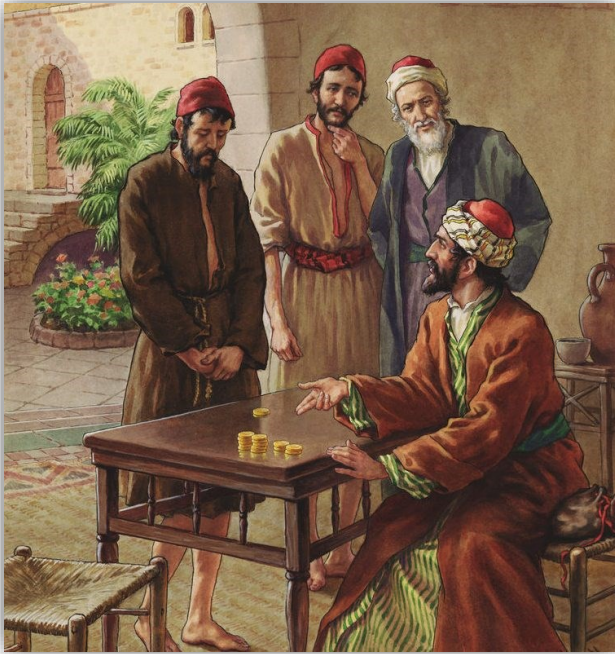
How many times in our own lives have we grown hopeless in our sins and do not seek forgiveness from God, or forget that God is always present and ready to forgive us? Pope Francis reminds us, "God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy" (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*: The Joy of the Gospel).

5. REMEMBER IT!

"... there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance."

(Luke 15:7)

JESUS' PARABLE OF THE DISHONEST STEWARD



Jesus said to his disciples, "A rich man had a steward who was reported to him for squandering his property. He summoned him and said, 'What is this I hear about you? Prepare a full account of your stewardship, because you can no longer be my steward.' The steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, now that my master is taking the position of steward away from me? I am not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg. I know what I shall do so that, when I am removed from the stewardship, they may welcome me into their homes.' He called in his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, 'How much do you owe my master?' He replied, 'One hundred measures of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Here is your promissory note. Sit down and quickly write one for fifty.' Then to another the steward said, 'And you, how much do you owe?' He replied, 'One hundred kors of wheat.' The steward said to him, 'Here is your promissory note; write one for eighty.' And the master

commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently. "For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones. If, therefore, you are not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, who will trust you with true wealth? If you are not trustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you what is yours? No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon."

1. Explore It!

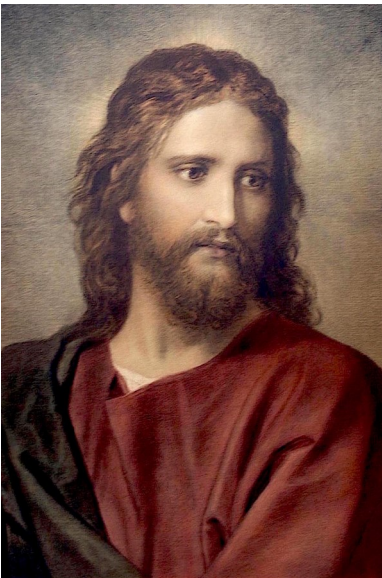
The steward was responsible for managing his wealthy landowner's property. The steward very likely overcharged his master's tenants for their use of the land and kept more than his fair share of the pay. When the landowner discovered the steward's dishonest practice, he immediately removed him from his job, which would leave him without money or shelter. Before news of his firing became public knowledge, the sly steward struck a deal with his master's debtors. In decreasing their debts, he was able to gain favor with the debtors while

also pocketing money for himself since he soon would be without a job. Since he acted as the landowner's financial manager, this deal made his master look very generous and forgiving towards those who owed him money. Surely, everyone would praise such a generous landowner. Since the master could not undo the steward's cancellation of the debts without making his debtors resent him, he praised the steward for outwitting him as a generous and merciful landowner.

5. Remember It!

“No servant can serve two masters.”

(Luke 16:13)



6. Pray It!

O LORD, all that I have are gifts from You. May I love You freely and generously with all that I possess. Help me to be a wise and honest steward of my resources, including the use of my time, money, and possessions.
Amen.

2. Connect It!

Obviously, the steward knew the master was a generous person and would not risk being ridiculed by the debtors. Therefore, in verse 9, Jesus is not praising the dishonesty but the ability of the steward to recognize the generosity of his master, see what was coming, and use what he had at the time to obtain something far greater: self-preservation.

In verses 10–12, Jesus explained that if one is faithful in “very small matters” (i.e., dishonest wealth), then one will be faithful in “great ones.” Similarly, if one is dishonest in small matters, he will also be dishonest in great matters. If we can’t be faithful with earthly wealth, which isn’t even ours to begin with, then how can we be entrusted with “true riches?” The “true riches” here refers to the stewardship and responsibility in God’s Kingdom along with all the accompanying heavenly rewards.

Think about when you’re in school and studying for a test. How easy is it to procrastinate and cram the information in at the last minute? Even if you get that A, you forget the important information the very next day. In the same way, we can’t just pursue quick, superficial desires in life, but we must recognize and work towards the long-term goal of receiving the rewards waiting for us in heaven.

3. Reflect It!

The dishonest steward is commended not for mishandling his master's wealth, but for his shrewd plan in avoiding personal disaster and securing his future livelihood. The original meaning of “shrewdness” is “foresight.” A shrewd person grasps a critical situation with foresight, sharpness in practical matters and determines resolutions to avoid serious loss or disaster. However, in this parable Jesus is concerned with something more important than a financial crisis. His concern is that we avert spiritual crisis and personal disaster through the exercise of faith and foresight. If we spent as much foresight and energy on spiritual matters as we do on earthly ones, then we would truly be better versions of ourselves, both in this life and in the one to come.

Think back to a difficult time you had this month, whether it be at home, in the classroom, or among your friends. What could you have done to bring Christ into your life that could have helped you through this time? Pray to God? Reach out to fellow VEYM members? Perhaps even reading the Bible to seek guidance? These are all ways we can exercise our faith even before we encounter hardships!

4. Live It!

[Honesty] – displaying good and truthful characters

To lead an honest life as God wants us to, here are a few ways you can follow in your daily life:

- Tell the truth
- Return what you have borrowed
- Do not deceive others for your own benefit
- Respect others’ properties
- Avoid situations that might cause you to be dishonest

Jesus' Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

WEEK C - 026

LUKE 16:19-31



Jesus said to the Pharisees: "There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.' Abraham replied, 'My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to

yours or from your side to ours.' He said, 'Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.' But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.' He said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.'"

1. EXPLORE IT!

Jesus tells another parable to the Pharisees regarding their lack of concern for the poor and needy. In this Gospel, there is a rich man whose self-preoccupation prevented him from tending to the poor man at his gate. Both die and the rich man goes to a place of great want and deprivation where he is suffering torment of the flames. In contrast, the poor man is in the presence and abundance of God's love.

The rich man asks Abraham to help warn his father and brothers. He asks that Lazarus, somebody from the dead whom the father and brothers would certainly listen to, be allowed to go to earth to tell of this reality. But Abraham tells him that the father and brothers have Moses and the prophets for guidance. Here, Jesus is explaining to the Pharisees that they have not only Abraham to look to, but also Moses and the prophets to guide them in how they should live, especially in relationship with the poor, orphans, widows, sick, and needy.

2. CONNECT IT!

Being wealthy here on earth is not necessarily a bad thing. However, we need to share the riches that God has given us with those less fortunate. Everything belongs to God including our wealth on earth. Jesus teaches us that we need to share these riches while we are on earth so that we can live an eternal life with Him.

In verses 24-25, "And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.' Abraham replied, 'My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented.' If the rich man had shared his food with the poor man while they were both on earth, then he would not have had to ask for pity after his death. In verse 31, Jesus teaches us to listen to Moses and the prophets while living on earth before it is too late.

5. REMEMBER IT!

"If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead." (Luke 16:31)

Thoughtfulness is the beginning of great sanctity. If you learn this art of being thoughtful, you will become more and more Christ-like, for his heart was meek and he always thought of others. Our vocation, to be beautiful, must be full of thought for others....

— Mother Teresa —

3. REFLECT IT!

The moral thing to do is to help people who are less blessed than us and are in need. Do we as Catholics ignore or turn away those who need our help? Do we pass by those who ask for assistance and hold back due to doubts? Wouldn't it be better to give rather than to let those doubts build up leading us to live with regret at a missed opportunity to make a difference? The teachings and parables that God left us with, especially today's passage, was meant to teach and warn us about what may happen to our soul after death.

4. LIVE IT!

[THOUGHTFULNESS]

kind and considerate regard for others

This week, try to do the following tasks to practice the virtue of thoughtfulness.

1. Help a sibling with homework.
2. Offer to do chores for your siblings/parents
3. Find out needs of your friends/relatives/family members and pray for them.

6. PRAY IT!

Lord, help me to understand Your teachings and incorporate them into my daily life so that I may live my life without regretting the things I should have done. Help me strive to treat my fellow man with kindness. Amen.



Jesus' Teaching on Faith

WEEK C - 027

LUKE 17:5-10

The Apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." The Lord replied, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

"Who among you would say to your servant who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here immediately and take your place at table'? Would he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat. Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink. You may eat and drink when I am finished'? Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded?



So should it be with you. When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'"

1. EXPLORE IT!

In response to the Apostles' request for more faith, Jesus says it is the quality, rather than quantity, of faith that needs revitalizing. A mulberry tree is huge with an extensive root system. It would be difficult not only to uproot this tree but to grow it in seawater. Genuine faith can bring about quite unexpected results. "When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'" This parable, which appears only in Luke, reminds and warns

church leaders that they are servants of the people and of God. They cannot stop and rest in the belief that they have worked enough. Luke's Gospel is one of total dedication. Notice the two sides of the coin presented by these two parables: with faith we can do anything, and we must continue to labor until the end. Salvation does not come by faith alone but by how it is lived out.

2. CONNECT IT!

We know God because of faith. We became God's children by inheriting our ancestors' faith. However, more faith is a hard grace to ask of God. We are invited to pray for an increase of faith which asks us to surrender a little bit of our demanding minds. We are not invited to give up asking questions but rather to pray through the puzzling and troubling events that challenge our faith.

Every good relationship we have in our lives is tested including the relationship we have with God. Faith, like any relationship, is a two-way street. God is inviting us to know Him more, to love Him more, and to trust in Him more every day. It is our job as faithful servants to listen and respond to this call.

4. LIVE IT! [FAITH]

Faith is a strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual understanding rather than proof.

To increase our faith, we need to focus on and conduct Catholic practices daily. These practices revolve around the liturgy and the seven sacraments especially the Eucharist. This week focus on truly living the Eucharistic Day. In the morning, give thanks to God for protecting you through the night and offer to Him all things that will come your way during the day. Throughout your day, take time to include God in your life by receiving spiritual communion, and if possible, attending Mass and receiving communion at least once during the weekday. At night, offer God your sacrifices and make perfect contrition so that you remain in His hands.

3. REFLECT IT!

As of present, it seems many young people are leaving the Catholic faith. According to the Pew survey, "Nine (9%) of those who were raised Catholic but no longer identify with the religion said they could not envision themselves eventually returning to the church".

(Source: Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Catholics and Family Life, September 2, 2015)

Young people are challenged by the media which is aligned against Catholic values. Television programs are often in direct opposition to the Catholic Church's teachings. Teens and youth are often deeply impacted by what they absorb from the media. They are losing their faith and losing God because they believe in themselves and trust their own efforts. Good Catholics put their faith in Jesus Christ and trust in God. Whom do you put your faith in?

5. REMEMBER IT!

**"IF YOU HAVE FAITH
THE SIZE OF A MUSTARD SEED,
YOU WOULD SAY TO THIS MULBERRY TREE,
'BE UPROOTED AND PLANTED IN THE SEA,'
AND IT WOULD OBEY YOU."
(LUKE 17:6)**

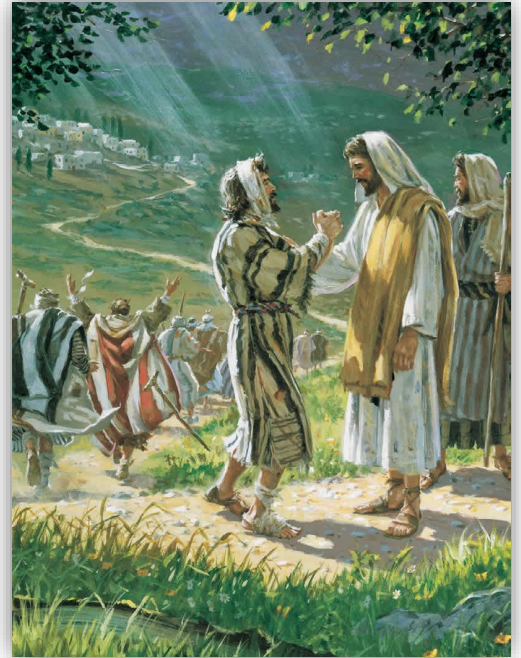
6. PRAY IT!

Lord help me to be strong in the Faith and believe in all You do for us. May we always have the strong will to spread Your Scriptures. Amen.

Jesus Healed the Ten Lepers

Luke 17:11-19

As Jesus continued his journey to Jerusalem, he traveled through Samaria and Galilee. As he was entering a village, ten lepers met him. They stood at a distance from him and raised their voice, saying, "Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!" And when he saw them, he said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." As they were going they were cleansed. And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice, and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus said in reply, "Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?" Then he said to him, "Stand up and go, your faith has saved you."



1. Explore It!

Ten lepers were cleansed by God, but out of the ten, only one thanked God for what He did. The cured leper was a Samaritan, a foreigner who did not believe in God. Although he did not know God, he was thankful for His miraculous healing. God worked through this man using the Samaritan as an example to remind us to always be grateful for our blessings.

Faith alone drove the Samaritan to ask for healing. It allowed him to humble himself and seek the help of a community that traditionally rejected his kind. Recognizing this, Jesus restored him to the community of the faithful - he was no longer considered an outcast. In Jesus, His disciples (us) find humanity's fullness.

2. Connect It!

The nine lepers that did not return represent most Christians. They enjoyed being freed from leprosy, but lost appreciation for the gifts they were given. They may have been grateful, but this gratitude didn't manifest itself into humble thanksgiving.

The leper who returned represents us when we come to our senses, or when we fully realize life's wonderful blessings. When we get in touch with what it means to be redeemed by Jesus, we start to realize our soul's sicknesses. We become more aware of how disordered, depressed, or angry our lives may be once we immerse ourselves in the river of Jesus' redemptive love.

3. Reflect It!

Giving thanks to God reminds us of how much we have received. We tend to focus on what we don't have. By giving thanks continually, however, we are reminded of how beautiful life is. When we focus on blessings rather than wants we are happier. When we start thanking God for the things we usually take for granted our perspective changes. We realize that everything we have is a gift from God. We could not even exist without the merciful blessings of God. What things in your life can you now recognize are gifts from God? In what ways can you give thanks to God for the gifts you have received?

4. Live It! [Gratitude]

Gratitude is the readiness to show appreciation for kindness and to return kindness.

For this week, to practice the virtue of gratitude:

1. Take 5 minutes every night to reflect on the things we are thankful for.
2. Write them down on a piece of paper:
For example: "I am grateful/thankful for my bed, a warm meal, a great conversation with my sister today."
3. Then give thanks to God for what you have received.

5. Remember It!

*"Has none but
this foreigner
returned to give
thanks to God?"
(Luke 17:18)*

6. Pray It!

Dear Lord,
today we give thanks for
many blessings as we pray
for those in need.
We give thanks for our family
and friends as we pray for
those who are lonely.
We give thanks for our good health
as we pray for those who are ill.
We give thanks for our comfort
and prosperity as we share
our blessings with others.
On this day of thanksgiving,
may the love of God enfold us,
the peace of God dwell within us
and the joy of God uplift us. Amen.

(source: Thanksgiving prayer; [http://
faceforwardcolumbus.com/](http://faceforwardcolumbus.com/))

TODAY I AM THANKFUL

books GRACE nature patience technology
health GRACE warm bed FAMILY husband LOVE health
BROTHER Shelter JOB FAITH MUSIC son JOY church
HOPE WIFE sister MENTORS sunshine
community DAUGHTER COFFEE



Jesus' Parable of the Persistent Widow

Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. He said, "There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God nor respected any human being. And a widow in that town used to come to him and say, 'Render a just decision for me against my adversary.' For a long time the judge was unwilling, but eventually he thought, 'While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being, because this widow keeps bothering me I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike me.'" The Lord said, "Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says. Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"



1.

Explore It!

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells the disciples the parable of the persistent widow. In this parable, a judge who fears nothing, including God, presides over the town. In this town, there is a widow who constantly bothers the judge asking for justice. After her constant attempts, the judge finally caves in, saying that if he does not choose to help her now she may come back and attack him later. Jesus then poses a question to the disciples about the justice God will provide and asks them to be persistent in prayer to God.

2.

Connect It!

The parable of the persistent widow reminds us to never give up on our endeavors. The widow sought justice for what she believed was right and kept returning to the judge no matter how many times he rejected her.

Jesus tells us to be persistent and as long as we continue to pray to God, He will answer our call. Although the way He answers our prayers may not always be the way we expect, rest assured that our prayers will always be heard and answered.

3.

Reflect It!

Sometimes the messages of Christ's parables aren't immediately obvious, but in this case, Jesus makes His meaning clear. He tells His followers He wants them to persist in prayer and to not lose heart, much like the widow acted in the parable.

Today, we reflect on our inability to alleviate the misery of our brokenness and sin. Christ invites us to cry out to Him with our needs, not to gain His favor or persuade Him to help, but to reach out and seek help. We remember that Christ has already begun the work of redeeming and restoring all things. Coming to Christ without fear and crying out in the poverty of our helplessness is an affirmation of faith. Is there an area in your life in which you have been tempted to give up on prayer? Will you accept Christ's invitation to persevere?

6.

Pray It!

Forgive me, Lord, for those times when I rest in my own abilities and forget I am as destitute as this widow. Forgive me when my faith grows thin and my persistence in prayer grows weak. Remind me to persist in coming to You without fear, offering to You the deepest cries of my heart. Help me to remember You are always powerful and good and are already at work redeeming and restoring all things. Amen.

4.

Live It!

[PERSEVERANCE]

steadfastness in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.

This week try to be persistent in prayer. When you encounter an obstacle, stop and pray. Instead of asking God to take away your problem, challenge yourself to pray that God grant you the gifts you may need to overcome the obstacle, whether that be strength, wisdom, patience, etc. Then challenge yourself to open your heart and your eyes to the way God may answer your prayer.

5.

Remember It!

“But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”
(Luke 18:8)

JESUS' PARABLE OF THE TWO MEN PRAYING IN THE TEMPLE

WEEK C - O30

LUKE 18:9-14

Jesus addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. "Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity -- greedy, dishonest, adulterous -- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.' But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.' I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself



1. EXPLORE IT

In Jesus' Gospel today, two individuals (one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector) brought themselves before God, paying Him homage and offering their prayers. Both spoke completely different prayers to God, but the prayer Jesus commended was the tax collector's. The Pharisee's prayer looked down on others, putting himself on a pedestal and thinking he was the best. On the other hand, tax collector said a humble prayer, acknowledging his sinful nature. We see two different ways of praying to God, but one of them Jesus recognized as being the more favorable one.

2. CONNECT IT!

In today's Gospel, we find two men coming to pray before God, one a Pharisee and the other a sinner. As human beings, we use our achievements to add value to our lives as the Pharisee has done. Sometimes, it means looking down on other people and making their achievements less valued than ours. We shouldn't put others down in order to build ourselves up. More so, we should be like the tax collector who humbled himself before the Lord. It is like Jesus said, "and the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Even though you will not be recognized by others for being humble, you will be favored in the eyes of God. Being prideful like the Pharisee will block your path to righteousness, making little room to improve and keeping yourself away from God.

3. REFLECT IT!

We tend to compare our actions to others in order to find value in ourselves, but is it worthwhile to push others down in order to elevate yourself? How many times have you looked down upon others and spoken lowly of them? In these moments, were there opportunities to display humility not only towards others but also towards yourself?

4. LIVE IT! [HUMILITY]

To be **HUMBLE** means to not think of yourself as better than others. Furthermore, if you excel at a certain thing, then you should not boast and be prideful. In living the Gospel this week, be mindful of the words you say to others. If you are more talented than your friend at something, do not look down on them. Instead, help them become as good as you and share your talents. Lower the pride you have for yourself because that is the key to becoming humbler. By showing more humility, we are able to see where we can improve ourselves and also be closer to God, like the tax collector.

5. REMEMBER IT!

**“...for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”
(Luke 18:14)**

6. PRAY IT!

O Lord, teach me to be more humble towards others and to not let my ego grow and get in the way of my relationship with You and others. Help me be like the tax collector and to acknowledge times when I can improve and look to You for guidance and strength. I ask this through Your Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.



Jesus and Zacchaeus The Tax Collector

WEEK C - 031

LUKE 19:1-10



At that time, Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

1. EXPLORE IT!

In today's Gospel, Jesus is passing through the town of Jericho. In that town, there was a chief tax collector by the name of Zacchaeus who wanted to see Jesus but was unable to because of his height. Zacchaeus climbed a tree ahead of the road in order to catch a glimpse of Jesus. As Jesus approaches, He looks up to see Zacchaeus in the tree and calls him down to have dinner at his home. The people gathered in the crowd judged Jesus for having dinner at the home of a sinner, to which Zacchaeus replies he will give away his prized possessions and make right all he had wronged. Jesus reminds all those around Him that the Son of Man came to bring salvation to all.

2. CONNECT IT!

What would you do if Jesus knocked on your door and said, "I must stay at your house today?" Would you be excited or embarrassed? Jesus often "dropped-in" at unexpected times, and He often visited the "uninvited" - the poor, the lame, and even known sinners like Zacchaeus the tax collector! Tax collectors were despised and treated as outcasts, no doubt, because they accumulated great wealth at the expense of others. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector and was hated by all the people. Why would Jesus single him out and allow Zacchaeus the honor of staying at his home? Zacchaeus needed God's merciful love, and in his encounter with Jesus he found more than he imagined possible. He shows the depth of his repentance by deciding to give half of his goods to the poor and to use the other half for making restitution for fraud. Zacchaeus' testimony included more than words - his change of heart resulted in a change in his life, a change that the whole community could experience as genuine. The Lord is always ready to make His home with us. Do you make room for Him in your heart and in your home?

3. REFLECT IT!

Zacchaeus was a sinner and so are we. As sinners, we are not worthy of God's love, and yet, He sends His own son down to our lowly statuses to die for our sins. Many of us continue to fall into temptation and sin, but He welcomes us with open arms to repent and come home. Through sacraments such as Baptism and Reconciliation, He takes away our sins just so His love can carry on within us. He has done so much for us, but have we done our part and prepared ourselves to receive His love? Do you make room for Him in your heart and in your home?

4. LIVE IT! [ENCOURAGEMENT]

Encouragement: The action of giving support confidence, or hope

We often think of encouragement as saying nice things to others to make them feel good about themselves, but this is closer to the definition of a compliment. Encouraging someone can mean you're giving them support or confidence but it also means that you're helping to develop something in them.

When the Bible refers to encouragement, it usually means that one is calling another person to their side in order to teach, comfort, strengthen or push them to act in a certain way. People who encourage others do so with words and acts of love, such as telling a person what he needs to hear when he needs to hear it—even if it isn't what he wants to hear. Encouraging someone is easy — it doesn't take money or time, and anyone can do it.

This week, challenge yourself to encourage someone to change a bad habit and remember to do it with love, grace, and wisdom. It can be gossiping about a person just because they are different or even pulling out your phone during Mass. Change your bad habits by encouraging others to change their own bad habits as well.

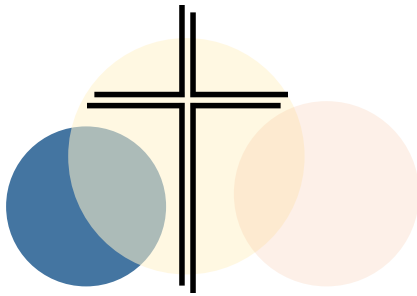
5. REMEMBER IT!

*"For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."
(Luke 19: 10)*

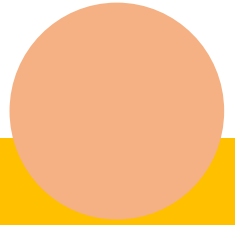
6. PRAY IT!

Lord, what joy You received through Zacchaeus conversion. He responded fully to Your grace. At times, I can drag my feet even when I feel You calling me to another step forward in my spiritual life. Help me to be generous, so that other souls will see how wonderful it is to follow You. Amen.





JESUS' TEACHING ON RESURRECTION



WEEK C - O32

LUKE 20:27-38

Some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, came forward and put this question to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us, If someone's brother dies leaving a wife but no child, his brother must take the wife and raise up descendants for his brother. Now there were seven brothers; the first married a woman but died childless. Then the second and the third married her, and likewise all the seven died childless. Finally, the woman also died. Now at the resurrection whose wife will that woman be? For all seven had been married to her." Jesus said to them, "The children of this age marry and remarry; but those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age and to the resurrection of the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. They can no longer die, for they are like angels; and they are the children of God because they are the ones who will rise. That the dead will rise even Moses made known in the passage about the bush, when he called out 'Lord,' the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."



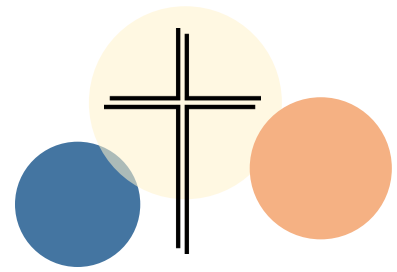
1. EXPLORE IT!

2. CONNECT IT!

Sadducees were respected leaders during the time of Jesus. Their basis was being in association with the Temple and ruling class. They had strong beliefs that it was doing whatever they can for the temple was what's right for the people. The challenge here was based on their disbelief of the resurrection, and it's here that Jesus reverses their weak understanding of the scripture by using the same "laws" that they held as foundation. Remember that during this time, a lot of people held Moses' law as absolute, and didn't really connect between Jesus' message and Moses' teaching as one and the same. They held a relatively "strick" and "literal" view which limited their scope on what it means to be a follower of God. Later on, Jesus actually counters with questions which the Sadducees have no answer to, which imply their submission and lack of understanding in comparison to Jesus.

Have you ever been approached by roaming individuals of different beliefs, and were asked "did you know the new revelation of Jesus, Mary..." or someone else of prominent stature in the bible, where they were so sure they knew the "real truth" behind what is religion? Have you ever sat down with these individuals to have a conversation and to see where you stand against your beliefs versus theirs? Were you able to defend your knowledge? Or did you simply state facts without fully understanding the why behind them?

Today's Scripture is a little like that. A lot of us think we understand Scripture, or memorize certain passages, without actually able to reflect and explain the intricacies of Jesus and His work in the broader spectrum of our lives and the world. Sometimes when sitting with these individuals, we feel weaker in our faith because "they have an answer for every question we have", and it's true. Use these situations to grow and improve on your own faith! Remember, they're trained against the most common questions just like the Sadducees were. We need to be as vigilant in our own understanding and not just simply stop at Mass or Sunday school!



3. REFLECT IT!

Sometimes we're so sure of ourselves, that the facts are right, that we're not open to any other kind of interpretation or challenge from anyone else even outside of our circle or community. This isn't an open challenge to second guess our teachings, but to learn to not only defend our faith but to understand how others are perceiving and why they see it that way. Tolerance in the views of others, and having a good, thorough conversation with one another is part of spreading God's word, and strengthening our own faith. Learning to listen to their premise, and challenging what we believe is true only helps everyone grow in our mission to understand God and His mission for us.

4. LIVE IT! [OPEN TO TRUTH]

To be Open to Truth is the willingness to accept and understand what that is true.

Similar to our connect it story, do you know of someone who has a strong belief that is different of your own? Throughout the week, be open to seeing and conversing with these individuals and see where you stand, and how from you are about our faith. Write down your experiences and be ready to share your story!

5. REMEMBER IT!

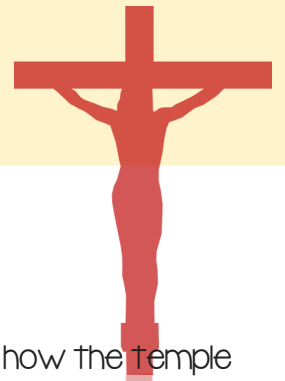
"...He is not God of the dead, but of the living."

(Luke 19:38)

6. PRAY IT!

Lord, allow my heart to be open to the truth about what it is to complete Your mission, to strengthen my faith when challenged, and to convey clearly what it is You teach to others who ask and seek Your way. Amen.

Persecution Because of Jesus



WEEK C - 033

LUKE 21:5-19



While some people were speaking about how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings, he said, "All that you see here—the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down." Then they asked him, "Teacher, when will this happen? And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?" He answered, "See that you not be deceived, for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and 'The time has come.' Do not follow them! When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified, for such things must happen first, but it will not immediately be the end." Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues from place to place;

and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky. "Before all this happens, however, they will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name. It will lead to your giving testimony. Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand, for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute. You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives.

1. Explore It!

In today's Gospel, Jesus predicts the fall of Jerusalem and alludes to what the end of the world may look like. When the people asked for "signs" so that they can be aware of when the last days will come, Jesus reminds them to always be awake and hold fast to their faith in the face of false prophets, natural disasters, conflicts uprising, etc. Jesus also foretells that as true followers of Christ, they will be persecuted for their faith. However, He reassures His disciples not to be worried for God is an omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (knowing everything), omnipresent (present everywhere) God, He will grant us the knowledge and wisdom so that we may be His witnesses. Furthermore, Jesus affirms that we will not be forsaken by God and "not a hair on your head will be destroyed." We are called to persevere and become witnesses for our faith.

2. Connect It!

We, as Catholics, and our faith are persecuted every day by secular society and media. There are false gods, idols, and prophets all over the place, attracting followers and claiming that they have the eternal truths. Society questions our fundamental belief of whether God exists. The present culture challenges our Catholic moral teachings by providing trends that are immoral, such as abortion, euthanasia, homosexual acts, etc. When natural disasters occur, people's faith are shaken of whether or not God exists. In this Gospel, Jesus reminds us that God will be with us. As much as we want to control the good and the bad that happens, God is in control and He has a path for us. At the same time, God does not leave us behind but instead gives us the knowledge and wisdom to help us stay strong and faithful to Him.

3. Reflect It!

In the face of persecutions, Jesus reaffirms with us in the Gospel that Our Father in Heaven will provide us with knowledge and "wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute." However, the question here becomes whether or not we allow God to live within us and allow Him to work through us. We are called to be witnesses, but do we act the part when we are outside of church grounds? Think about the moments when we ignore Him and put our trust in other matters. How can we act as witnesses in these moments?

4. Live It! **[Peace]**

Peace is the state prevailing during the absence of war, the general security of public places, or absence of mental stress or anxiety.

The virtue we are practicing this week is Peace. We are called to live peacefully even in the face of persecution. It is also important to remember that true peace goes hand in hand with justice.

Peace is simply blocking out all the bad things such as inequality and conflict. It is about having a different point of view. For example, rather than ignoring the problems between you and your friends, listen to all sides of the story to discern the truth and apologize when someone is at fault. When you are faced with a difficult situation don't make any assumptions or jump to conclusions. Take a step back, breathe in, and approach the situation one step at a time in order to find the best solution.



5. Remember It!

"By your perseverance you will secure your lives." (Luke 21:19)

6. Pray It!

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy."

(Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi)

Jesus, the King of Mercy

SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

WEEK C - O34

LUKE 23:35-43

The rulers sneered at Jesus and said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God." Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, "If you are King of the Jews, save yourself." Above him there was an inscription that read, "This is the King of the Jews."

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."



1. Explore It!

There were two different reactions below Jesus as He hangs on the cross. There were people that were silent and there were people that mocked and ridiculed Him like the soldiers. There were also two separate reactions from the two criminals hanging beside Jesus. One of the criminals echoed the words of the soldiers saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us." The other

criminal, however, knew his sins and knew that Jesus was innocent. Among the many people listed in this passage, only the one man hanging beside Christ was able to seek Jesus' love and mercy.

2

Connect It!

We should be like the second criminal who was crucified next to Jesus. Whereas the first criminal mocked Jesus telling Him to save them because He is the Messiah, the second criminal realized his sins and acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. Our faith in Jesus must be like the second criminal's faith. Our sins can only be forgiven if we acknowledge our wrongdoings as the brave criminal did. Jesus, as the King of Mercy, forgives us if we reach out to Him through Reconciliation.

Jesus is our Messiah, our King and Savior. He was crucified for our sins. As He hung on the cross in pain, thirst, and discomfort, He still loved and forgave us. The second criminal who hung beside Jesus experienced His love and mercy firsthand. Jesus forgave and welcomed him into His Kingdom for the man truly believed Jesus was the Messiah.

4.

Live It!

[Accountability]

An obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions.

Comparing the two criminals, the second criminal knew he was accountable for his own sins. He regretted and accepted his punishment and did not ask to be saved like the first criminal. We must also be accountable for our own actions regardless if they are right or wrong.

This week, list 3 things that you weren't accountable for last week. Think about why you didn't do them and what negative effect it had on you. This week, try to commit to completing those 3 things to make sure it creates a positive impact on your life rather than looming over you.

Example: Chores, work, schoolwork etc.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3

Reflect It!

Have you ever felt that the world has turned on you? What do you normally do in these situations? Do you drown yourself in your own suffering, or help others with theirs? While Jesus hangs on the cross, He put His suffering aside to show mercy for the second criminal who asked for salvation. This week help as many people as you can. Put your problems aside to help others in need. It doesn't have to be something grand such as helping out at a soup kitchen, but even something as simple as putting up your shoes when you get home instead of throwing them on the floor.

How strong is your faith in Jesus? Do you need to see and witness a miracle from Jesus to believe He is our King? "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). We must always keep Jesus' suffering in our hearts. We may not always be able to see Jesus, but we can feel His love all around us. He is

5.

Remember It!

**"JESUS, REMEMBER ME WHEN
YOU COME INTO YOUR KINGDOM"
(LUKE 23:42)**

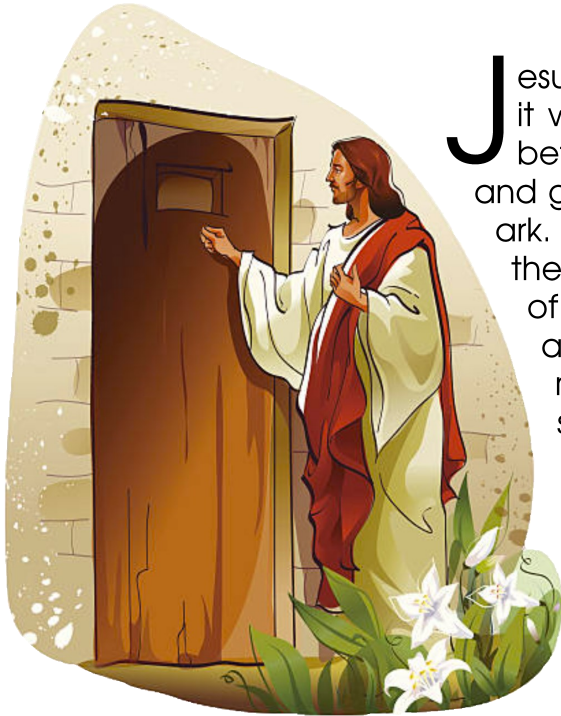
6.

Pray It!

Dear Lord, please give me the strength to take accountability for my sins and actions and to accept the consequences of my actions like the repentant criminal who hung beside You. Please guide me so that I may put any suffering and pain I encounter aside to help others as You have done countless times. Amen.

The Coming of Jesus

WEEK A - A1
MATTHEW 24:37-44



Jesus said to his disciples: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of the night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

1. EXPLORE IT!

During Noah's time on Earth, people distanced themselves from God by living in sin and displeasing Him. God was angry to the extent that he wanted to destroy the entire human race. Only Noah's family lived a good life that was pleasing to the Lord. The Lord spoke to Noah, telling him to build an ark for his family and for two of each animal species on earth. God's wrathful flood killed the human race, except for Noah, his family, and the animals in the ark.

We learn in this passage that God is just as much as he is merciful. Nothing impure may enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and any offense to God does not go unnoticed. God wants us to be alert of this, to live virtuously, and to prepare for His coming. We must always live lives pleasing to God because we may never know when our Christ will come to judge us.

2. CONNECT IT!

The story of Noah's Ark speaks of God's nature of divine mercy: loving, but just. God's loving mercy can be seen from our parents. Parents guide us, but they also punish us when we make mistakes. If we do the right thing and obey, we are rewarded. Let us all do the right thing, so that we can show love to the people who love us.

3. REFLECT IT!

We often do things without thinking about the consequences. Our lives are so busy with distractions that we don't even take the time to reflect on our daily actions. Do you act spontaneously or rashly? Have you ever regretted doing something or wish that you could have done something differently? Sometimes we never get a chance to correct ourselves. Sometimes it can be too late. If we live our lives morally and do God's will, we won't need to live with regret or sorrow. If we prepare ourselves to start doing good now, we can look forward to the day of Christ's coming later.

4. LIVE IT [PREPAREDNESS]

Today's Gospel teaches about a virtue that we need to have in life, and especially during the Advent season: **Preparedness**. Prepared people practice good habits. They are always alert, and they always look out for their loved ones as well.

In your day-to-day life, practice preparedness by keeping a routine. Try and make sure you take pack all your school things the night before so you don't scramble in the morning. Try to prepare for your tests by studying in advance rather than waiting last minute. Practicing these habits leads to good outcomes.

In your spiritual life, especially during this season of Advent, prepare for Christ's coming by praying daily with your family and reflecting on how you can be the best version of yourself. Practice spiritual mindfulness by keeping Christ at the center of all your decisions.



5. REMEMBER IT!

**"Therefore, stay awake!
For you do not know
on which day your
Lord will come."
(Matthew 24: 42)**

6. PRAY IT!

Lord, please help me listen to You today to be alert and ready for Your coming. Please give me the grace to be alert and to always live a faithful life keeping Your commandments.

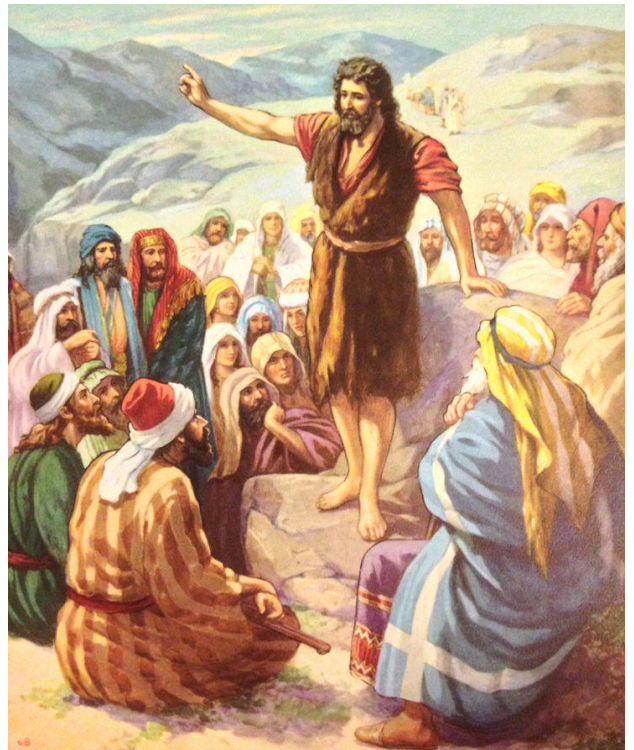
Prepare the Way for Jesus

WEEK A - A2

MATTHEW 3:1-12

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: 'A voice of one crying out in the desert, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.' John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."



1. Explore It!

- "A voice of one crying in the deserts: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight his paths. What does John the Baptist mean by "prepare"? To "prepare" in this sense is to "repent". One must prepare for the coming of the Lord by repenting for one's sins. John the Baptist paints us an image of straightening a path, which is symbolic of getting our lives in order. Repenting of one's sins is paramount to getting our lives in order to join Jesus; helping others realize their need for repentance follows close after.
- "Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance... Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. "Good fruit" is a theme that can be found across the Bible. Only a good tree bears good fruit. A bad tree bears bad fruit God gives us consciences to help determine what is good and what is bad. Good things are contagious - they spread like the seeds of a healthy tree. If your example is good, those who follow will be good as well.

- "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." Fire burns. It can destroy but it can also pave the way for new things to grow. In this case, the Holy Spirit's fire is a purifying burn, a burn that will rid you of sinful impurity. It is a cleansing fire, and a healing. When we are baptized with water as infants, we enter God's family. When we are baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire, we are renewed again. This fire strengthens our faith and helps us live our lives as witnesses for Christ.

2. Reflect It!

Today's Gospel encourages us to repent and prepare for God's coming. If God comes today and asks you to join Him, will you be ready? Imagine being separated by the person in your life that you love the most. Now imagine being separated from your own Creator, the one that formed you in the womb and knew you before you were born. God wants each and every one of us to experience His love and joy but those who do not repent cannot join our Father in Heaven because nothing impure can enter its gates.

4. Live It [**REPENTANCE**]

Repentance - the action of repenting; sincere regret or remorse.

Make confession once a month your goal for the year, and encourage your friends to do the same.



3. Connect It!

Have you ever received something that you felt you didn't really earn? For example, a good grade on a test when you didn't study, or a compliment for something that someone else did? How about your parents love for you? Often times we say things to them we don't really mean, or do things that really upset them. Yes, they may get upset, or say something harsh in return, but their love for you never changes. God's love for you is more perfect than this. Except, it's usually easier for us to repair our relationships with our friends and family than it is to build our relationship with God. Take time to nurture your relationship with Him. Take time to repent and straighten your path for Him.

5. Remember It!

"Repent, for the kingdom
of heaven is at hand!"
(Matthew 3:2)

6. Pray It!

Dear Jesus, we need You in our life. Please help us repent so we can also have the courage to bring our brothers and sisters closer to You. Help us clear the path for You, and in doing so, be granted everlasting life by Your side. Amen.

Jesus' Testimony to John

WEEK A - A3

MATTHEW 11:2-11

When John the Baptist heard in prison of the works of the Christ, he sent his disciples to Jesus with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleanse, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

As they were going off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces. Then why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: *Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you.* Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."



1. EXPLORE IT!

While in prison, John the Baptist sends his disciples to question whether or not Jesus is really "the one who is to come". Jesus instructs them to return to John to tell him what they have heard and seen of the many miracles that have occurred. The blind, the lame, the lepers, the deaf, the dead, and the poor – they were all blessed with Jesus' miracles. However, Jesus makes it a point to say that anyone can be blessed, as long as they don't offend Him by sinning.

The greatest blessing that we can receive is being able to join Jesus in Heaven. Jesus humbles us when He states that even the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than John the Baptist. In this passage, we see how difficult it is to be able to enter Heaven's gates.



2. CONNECT IT!

John the Baptist was placed into prison because he was spreading God's Word and telling people that they were not living up to the ideals of God. John said Jesus would come and show them how to live in such a way. With John in prison, he questions whether or not he did the right thing and if Jesus was really going to present Himself.

The blind seeing, the lame walking, the sick being healed, and the dead living are all examples of miracles that existed because John helped spread the Word of God. John the

Baptist sacrificed his very own freedom in order to help share a better understanding of God with others.

We sacrifice our own time to attend VEYM meeting on Sundays. Sometimes we question why we go and whether there is a benefit to it all. But with this sacrifice comes responsibility. Because of our presence, the younger children have role models. We should become worthy to be these role models, keeping in mind always that there are those who are still greater than us.

3. REFLECT IT!

Each day, we are faced with many challenges that make us doubt our faith in Jesus. Cruelty, violence, injustice, oppression - these are all things that can tempt us into doubt. One must always remember that Jesus walks with us on all our paths, no matter how difficult.

Think of our lives as VEYM member and how we help spread

God's word and teachings to each other. Are you doing your part to strengthen your relationship with Jesus? Are you helping others to do the same? Jesus sent His messenger, John the Baptist, before all of us so that He could prepare and help us understand God's word. We are also messengers of Jesus so we must go forth to prepare and help others as John once did.

4. LIVE IT! [EVANGELICAL]

Evangelical — Pertaining to, belonging to, or in keeping with the Gospel and its teachings.

Let us go out and spread God's Word via bible Gospel readings. Share this week's reading with friends who aren't religious or even Catholic. Share what the saints have said about the Gospel.

Sacrifice some of our time to be like John the Baptist. Preach our religion through example and acts of faith so that others may come to know God.

6. PRAY IT!

Dear Lord, thank you for guiding us to be evangelical individuals. Give us strength and courage so that we may go out and share with others about Your ideals. Let us continue to have faith and as each day progresses, that faith may grow and grow. Amen.

5. REMEMBER IT!

*"Behold, I am
sending my messenger
ahead of you;
he will prepare your
way before you"
(Matthew 11:10)*



The Birth of Jesus

WEEK A – A4

MATTHEW 1:18-24



This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: *Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel*, which means “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

1. EXPLORE IT!

Betrothal was the first step of marriage in ancient Israel. It meant that the man and woman were now called husband and wife, but it wasn't until months later that they would get married and the husband would take his wife into his home. Any acts of unfaithfulness after betrothal was considered adultery and was a punishable offense of the law that resulted in death by stoning. If Mary was pregnant, the natural assumption would have been adultery. Because Joseph was a righteous man, he contemplated quietly divorcing Mary to avoid embarrassing her and having her punished. Being a devout Jew, he turned to God in prayer for

answers. In response, God sent an angel to appear to Joseph in his dream to comfort him and reassure him that God did indeed call Joseph to be the foster father of Jesus. Joseph believed in the message from the angel and began a journey that would take a considerable amount of faith in God. In doing this, Joseph became a role model for us as a righteous and faithful servant of God who was willing to accept God's plans even when faced with difficult circumstances.

The law in Joseph's time was strict. According to the law, Mary should have been put to death. Joseph was a just man, but his justice was different.

2. CONNECT IT!

Before the angel appeared to Joseph to comfort him, he considered canceling the betrothal upon discovering that Mary was pregnant in order to avoid the inevitable consequences that she would have faced. In doing this, he was already practicing what his foster son, Jesus, would be teaching later: that the New Law would abolish and fulfill at the same time the Old Law. In what ways can you be like Joseph and go against social norms to do what is right and just in the eyes of God?

3. REFLECT IT!

To be able to know that his dream was a message from God, Joseph must have had a relationship with God and had some idea about how God communicates with people. Do you have a concept of how God speaks to people? Do you work to grow your relationship with God? If not, then how can you know when God is speaking to you? What can you do to strengthen your bond with God?

4. LIVE IT! [RIGHTEOUSNESS]

Righteousness - The state of being right with God

Living a righteous life implies that we live a life that is pleasing to God by our just actions as Catholics. Joseph was able to be righteous even when things got complicated. This week, make an effort to be righteous in a situation that calls for justice, whether it is by asking God to help you know what is right and wrong, avoiding the temptations in your life, or standing up for what is right.

5. REMEMBER IT!

"She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

(Matthew 1:21)



6. PRAY IT!

Lord, make me hungry and thirsty for righteousness sake! Grant me a passion for loving, knowing and doing Your word! Help me to be wise enough to tell the difference between truth and justice and lies and corruption. Teach me to stop judging others and to begin to worry more about the distance between the life I live and the life You expect and desire of me. Amen.

JESUS, THE WORD, BECAME FLESH

WEEK A – NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)

JOHN 1:1-5, 9-14



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him.

1. EXPLORE IT!

On Christmas we celebrate the Incarnation of Jesus, “the Word became flesh,” which means God became human. In today’s Gospel, John uses words similar to the words from the Creation story in Genesis which starts with “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...God said: Let there be light...” (Jn 1:1,3). John is showing us that Jesus, the second person in the Holy Trinity, is God since He was there “in the beginning” before creation—that Jesus is the Word that created heaven and earth. John is also telling us that Jesus’ birth was always in God’s plan from the very beginning. Jesus who is “the Word” and “the light” became one of us to bring the Good News: that we can be saved from the darkness of sin and become children of God if we accept and follow Him.

2. CONNECT IT!

Jesus truly became one of us. Imagine a mighty king who decides to renounce his royal status and power to live among the common people to share in their lives and accompany them in their struggles. For a more modern example, picture that show where a CEO goes undercover to meet the employees working in the company. Out of His great love for us, God wanted to be with us to share in our joys and sorrows as fully God and fully human. Think about your family and friends. When we really love someone, we are willing to sacrifice for them. Thank God for loving us so much! He entered the world in poverty knowing He would suffer for us.

3. REFLECT IT!

On Christmas Day, we may get caught up in all the fun and festivities—the decorations, the presents, the food. As we reflect on the Gospel today, let us remember the reason for the season. God tells us no matter your history, your circumstances, or how, when, or where you were raised, those who accept Him are given the “power to become children of God.” How can you truly accept and receive Christ Jesus to dwell in your heart?

4. LIVE IT! [GRACE]

There are different types of love, the highest form of love being agape or unconditional, selfless, sacrificial love. This love is used by Jesus to describe the love among the persons of the Holy Trinity and is also the love He commanded us to have for one another.

God's love for us is so generous. God, the greatest reality and Creator of the universe, humbled Himself to become human for us. He still dwells among us in the Eucharist and within each one of us. How can you show greater love for Him in the Eucharist? We love because He loved us first. How can we share God's love for us with everyone we meet?

6. PRAY IT!

Dear Baby Jesus, thank you for the greatest gift of love which is Yourself. Let Your love move us to share Your love with everyone we encounter. Amen

5. REMEMBER

*“And the Word
became flesh and made
his dwelling among us,
and we saw his glory”
(John 1:14)*



WEEK A
THE HOLY FAMILY

MT 2:13-15, 19-23

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH

When the magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you.



Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, *Out of Egypt I called my son.*

When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, *He shall be called a Nazorean.*

1 | EXPLORE IT!

Today's Gospel takes us to the birth of a leader. To summarize, Jesus' life was protected because Joseph obeyed God's directions. In a dream, the angel of the Lord told Joseph to flee the dangers in Judea. God guided Joseph and his family away from Bethlehem to Egypt, and finally to return to Nazareth in Galilee when Herod had died in Galilee where Jesus grew up.

2 | CONNECT IT!

During Joseph's time, he didn't have the benefit of having the complete Bible, so God had to speak to him through angels. Fortunately for us, we have the Scriptures to return to. Even John 5:39 has us returning to the Scriptures: "You search the Scriptures, because you think you have eternal life through them; even they testify on my behalf". Through the Bible, and especially the Gospels, we can learn to obey God's commandments. God speaks to us through Jesus' Great Commandment to love Him and others. In obeying God, are we protected from Satan's temptations, just as Joseph's obedience to God protected Jesus from death.

3 | REFLECT IT!

Sometimes we feel like we are doing well in our lives, where it seems like we don't need Jesus. Maybe we won a tournament or we aced a test. The opposite can even exist, where we aren't doing well and we want to go to someone, but we don't know who to turn to. Just as Joseph put his faith in God and obeyed Him, are there moments in your life where you can put your life into God's hands, knowing that He will protect you? Things you can consider are your study habits or even the effort you put into your friendships.

4 | LIVE IT! [OBEDIENCE]

Obedience is the act or practice of obeying; dutiful or submissive compliance.

When the military sends out an order, it is expected a soldier will obey it because of the chain of command. It can be difficult to obey someone because you have to. However, in the Catholic world, when there is an element of love and trust, obedience to someone you know who loves you unconditionally can be liberating.

As Joseph was obedient to God to protect his family, and Jesus was obedient to God to protect humankind, may we also be obedient God. Take this upcoming week to obey the Great Commandments of loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind as well as loving your neighbor as yourself. What actions make you feel most loved? Is it a compliment or when someone buys you a Boba drink? Reflect on this, go out and do these things for the people around you.

5 | REMEMBER IT!

"He (Joseph) rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel."

(Matthew 2:21)

6 | PRAY IT!

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for creating a role model out of Joseph, Jesus' earthly father, to teach us how to obey You. Help us realize that Your commandments stem from Your love for us. Please grant us the humility to obey You. Amen.



LUKE 1:26-38

MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS

The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them. When eight days were completed for



1. EXPLORE It!

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. Mary's role as the Mother of God primarily emphasizes that Jesus was truly human and lived a real, human life. Jesus was born into an Israelite family who raised Jesus in the Jewish faith, as demonstrated by Mary and Joseph taking Jesus to be circumcised. Circumcision was a sign that the people of Israel were to be holy, or set apart, for God. We know now that Israel was set apart from other nations because from Israel the Messiah was born, the one who would save us.

2. CONNECT It!

As the Mother of God, Mary was given a special and unique mission. As children of God, we are also given our own missions. God created all of us to be unique and gave us different gifts and talents to live a full and happy life. In the words of St. Francis de Sales: "Be who you are and be that well. So that you may bring honor to the Master Craftsman whose handiwork you are." We can look to Mary for guidance in how to navigate our own mission—with prayer and trust in God.



3. REFLECT IT!

God loved us so much that He became man to share in our humanity. Being both fully God and fully human, Jesus shared in our experiences of joys, sufferings, and ultimately death. In doing so, He conquered death and saved us from our sins so that we can also resurrect and live forever in heaven with Him. But why did God choose Mary? Why did He choose the Israelite people? Some things remain a mystery to us. We can never truly understand God's ways, but we trust

in what He has revealed to us through His Word in the Bible and through the Roman Catholic Church. We may not understand everything that happens in our lives, but just as Mary who did not know everything about God's plan, we can still say "Yes" with great trust that God wants the best for us and will take care of us. Have there been times in your life when you did not understand why God allowed things to happen? Looking back, how was God present with you during that time?

4. LIVE IT! [PEACEFULNESS]



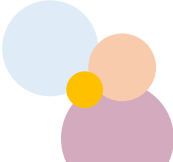
The state of being quiet and calm, free from disturbances and worries.

The birth of Jesus was very stressful for Mary and Joseph: they had to travel far away from home, could not find a place to stay, and ended up in a dirty and cold stable with the animals. Mary had to give birth to Jesus in this uncomfortable environment. Even through these circumstances, Mary was peaceful. She accepted her role in God's great plan of salvation and trusted that God was taking care of her as she reflected on these things in her heart. This week, take the time for this five minute prayer: slowly breathe for one minute, letting go of all your worries; for the next three minutes, quietly reflect with God on your day; in the last minute, thank God for always being present with you.

5. REMEMBER IT!



**"AND MARY KEPT ALL THESE THINGS,
REFLECTING ON THEM
IN HER HEART."
(LUKE 2:19)**



6. PRAY IT!



Dear God, thank you for being our Savior and for choosing Mary to be our mother. We pray to courageously accept Your will for us just as Mary did, trusting that You have given each and every one of us a special mission in life. Amen.

Follow Jesus' Star

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage."

After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.



1. Explore It!

With the birth of the King of Kings, three magi followed a star and traveled West towards Jerusalem to bring gifts to the newborn king. King Herod, startled at the birth of a rival, asked his advisors where the newborn Christ might be born. The advisors informed King Herod and the magi of a prophecy that Bethlehem would be the birthplace of the ruler, who is to shepherd [the people of] Israel. Herod asked the magi to find the newborn child and report their findings to him so that he too, could pay his respects. Continuing their journey, the magi followed the star until they found Mary with her son and offered their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh as a tribute to the King of Kings. Afterwards, the magi went back to their home country using a different path, having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod.


2. Connect It!

Today, just as it was then, Jesus has the same effect on people in the world. There are some people who see Jesus as a rival and nuisance to their lives, and there are those who see Jesus as King and savior. Which group do you belong to? The magi needed to follow a star to find Jesus, but we do not need to follow a star to find Jesus as he is already present in our lives. His love shines brightly in us already. We need to allow that glow to radiate to lead others to Jesus presence.

3. Reflect It!

In the magi's visit, they brought Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Today, these gifts are impractical, but we can still be like the magi and offer Jesus gifts worthy of his Kingship. The VEYM has already taught us how to offer gifts worthy of Jesus: Bo Hoa Thieng or Spiritual Bouquets. Each time we perform a task in the spiritual bouquet—whether it is to attend mass, do a good deed, or just sit with Him during adoration—we are offering to Jesus our love. What can you do this week to pay homage to Jesus? What sacrifices or deeds can you do to fill out your spiritual bouquet to offer up to Jesus and be magi ourselves?

5. Remember It!



“They were overjoyed at seeing the star.”
(Matthew 2:10)

6. Pray It!

Dear Jesus, like the star guiding the magi to You, continue to radiate Your love as a beacon of joy in my life. Help me to be the best I can be, as a testament to my faith, joy and love for You. Amen.

4. Live It!

[Joyfulness]

Joyfulness – causing or bringing joy, as an event, a sight, or news; delightful

Joy is an emotion when you have happiness from something good. Joyfulness is when you are so full of joy inside you that it radiates to the world. With the birth of Jesus, the magi were filled with joyfulness by simply being in His presence. As Catholics, we are lucky to not just be in His presence through the Eucharist, but also to know Him and His love. Look around and see all the blessings and love that God has bestowed on you. This week, share some of your joyfulness and radiate Jesus love to others from a simple smile to a stranger to helping someone in need.



THE BAPTISM OF JESUS



Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

1. Explore It!

John the Baptist was preaching in Judea and people were flocking to him to be baptized in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. Although Jesus has no sins and no need of repentance, He came and allowed John to baptize Him to "fulfill all righteousness". This act signifies Jesus' total submission to the Father's will.

Additionally, at this scene, the Trinity was revealed to us: the voice of the Father, the baptism of the Son, and the descent of the Holy Spirit.

2. Connect It!

In the Old Testament, priests, prophets, and kings were anointed by a Levite as they began their office (e.g., David was anointed by Samuel). In today's Gospel, at the beginning of His office and ministry, Jesus was baptized by John. He transformed the Jewish purification ritual into the Sacrament of Baptism, which we received at the beginning of our new life of grace. When we are baptized, we are reborn as children of God and are anointed into the three-fold ministry of Christ: priest, prophet, and king.

3. Reflect It!

Jesus submitted Himself to the Father's will and allowed John to baptize Him even though He did not need to be baptized. When we are assigned a task, do we carry it out in loving obedience and respect of the one who assigned us the task? How may pride or laziness get in the way of us fulfilling our responsibility?



4. Live It! [Duty]

Duty - responsibility; respectful and obedient conduct

Jesus fulfilled His duty by obeying the Father's will. Let us imitate Jesus in fulfilling our responsibilities. This week, finish your homeworks and chores without complaints.



5. Remember It!

"Allow it now,
for thus it is fitting
for us to fulfill all
righteousness.
(Matthew 3:15)

6. Pray It!

O loving Jesus! Through the water of Baptism, we become children of our Heavenly Father. Please instill in us fervent love and piety so we can fulfill our duty. We ask this of You, Lord Jesus, who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

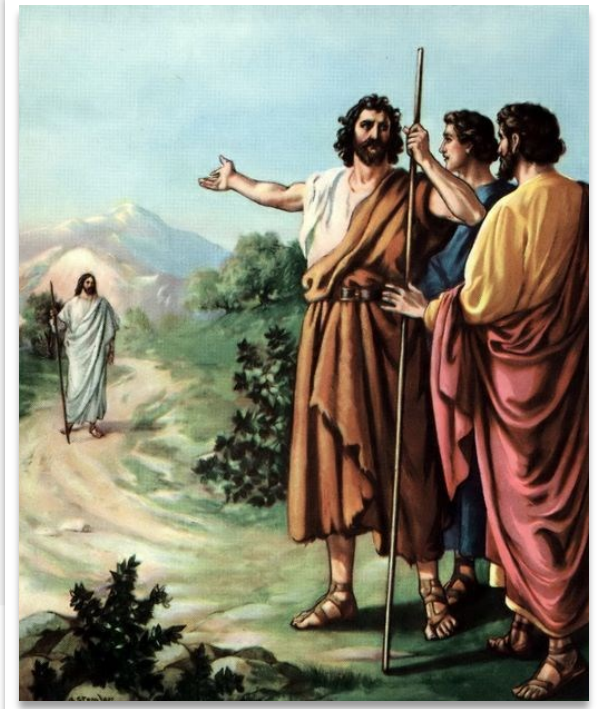


John's Testimony to **JESUS**

WEEK A - O2

JOHN 1:29-34

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.' I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel." John testified further, saying, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God."



1. Explore It!

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist is the first to testify about who Jesus is. He states Jesus is not only the Son of God but also the Lamb of God because Jesus is the complete and final sacrifice for sins. John the Baptist's ministry is to prepare for the coming of Jesus, the Son of God. John the Baptist does not recognize the Messiah; only when He baptized Jesus and saw the dove, the Holy Spirit from the sky remain upon Jesus.

2. Connect It!

John the Baptist was given an important role: to prepare for the coming of Jesus, Son of God, and to testify about Him. Like John the Baptist, we also need to share the responsibility of "introducing" Christ to our neighbors, friends, families, and communities.

3.

Reflect It!

John the Baptist testified about Jesus. What about us? Can our lives be a testimony for Jesus? Our testimony must be in public through our lifestyle, actions, and words. If our lives are a testimony for Jesus Christ, when people look at us, do they see the characteristics of Christ?

4.

Live It! [WITNESS]

Witness – someone who sees an event and gives or serve as evidence of it.

John the Baptist showed how to be a witness to God. Being a witness to God is to live our daily lives as Jesus' teachings. You can use social media to spread the good news of the Gospel or stories of people who have done great things in this world such as Saint Mother Teresa, Saint Pope John Paul II or Pope Francis. For this week, share some acts of kindness to someone as a way to give witness to Christ's love.

5.

Remember It!

*"Now I have seen and testified that he is Son of God."
(John 1:29-34)*



6.

Pray It!

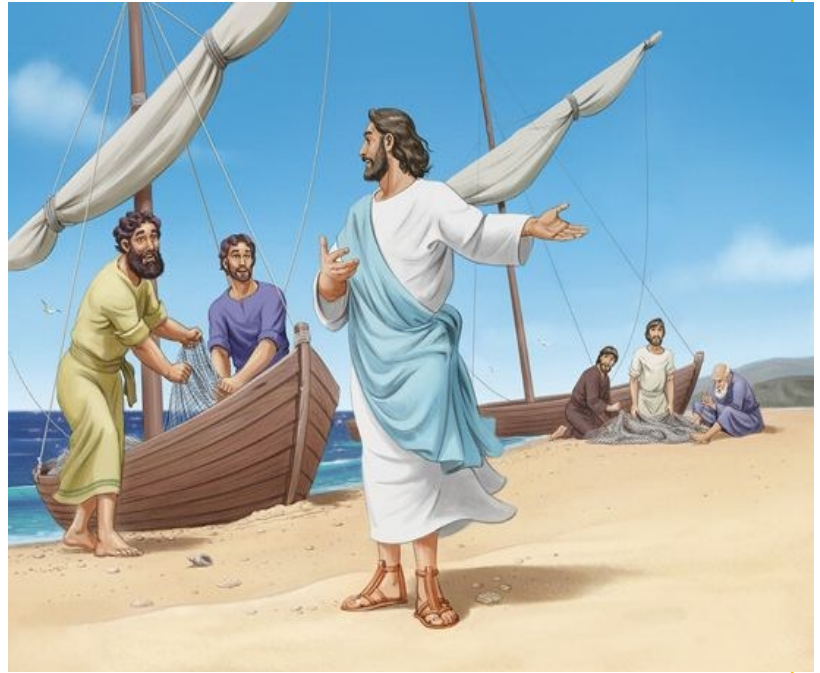
Father, we thank you for all that You have given to us, especially Your son, Jesus. We thank you for giving us eyes to see You, and ears to hear Your calling to do what is not our will but Yours. We ask You to send down the Holy Spirit to guide us, to open our eyes and ears to be the witnesses of Your Son's teachings. Amen.



JESUS' MINISTRY

When he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: *Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen.* From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They



were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him. He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people.

1. Explore It!

After John the Baptist was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee and began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.". This marked the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He started choosing His disciples who will continue His ministry. As He passed by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus asked them to follow Him. They abandoned their

nets and followed Jesus. Jesus walked along a little farther and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They too were in a boat with their father mending their nets. He again asked them to follow Him. They left their father and followed Jesus.



2. Connect It!

The idea of fishing is to understand a variety of things: the environment, what kind of lures, the correct equipment to use, the water movements and depth. After we understand everything we need for real fishing, then how do we relate that to being fishers of men? The preparation Jesus offers requires a large commitment, as evidenced with their leaving personal belongings and their families behind. In order to be a disciple, we must be willing to give up everything for Jesus. God has required total commitment from His followers, to the point of heart-breaking separation from any natural family members who possibly reject Jesus.

Each day, we are faced with many challenges that make us doubt our faith in Jesus, such as all the suffering in the world due to violence, injustice, and crime. But we must remember that Jesus walks with us on our paths no matter how difficult and challenging they may be. God sent His messenger, John the Baptist, before all of us so that he could prepare and help us understand God's Word through Jesus. In a similar sense, we are also called to be messengers of Jesus so we must go forth to prepare and help others as John once did.

3. Reflect It!

You will start on your own journey of discovery and faith. It probably started joining a high school. Soon, higher education. A job even. Maybe going to VEYM is your journey itself. All of these journeys are rooted in becoming better for whatever reason: to be smarter, to fund a particular lifestyle, to help family. God calls on us for a commitment higher than all of these combined. Simply going to VEYM or becoming a Youth-Leader aren't good enough. Jesus is asking us to commit not just spiritually and physically, but emotionally too; the want and need of God for our entirety, not just for the weekend, or for three to four years, or as long as the journey takes.

4. Live It!

[COMMITMENT]

Having commitment means to be dedicated to a cause and activity. It can also mean being part of an engagement or obligation that can at times restrict your freedom of action. Being committed requires some sacrifice in the latter part of this definition, where your time spent here is time you could not spend elsewhere. What are some of the things you have a commitment to? Each night, describe one commitment and how its impacted your life; does it give you joy, what did you have to give up, does it impact others than yourself, etc.



5. Remember It!

*“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
(Matthew 4:17)*

6. Pray It!

Lord, bless us with the strength and patience to stay committed to Your teachings and way of life. Allow us to understand by walking Your path, casting our own net in Your name so that we may share in Your love and joy for all. Amen.

JESUS PROCLAIMS GOD'S BLESSINGS

WEEK A - 04
MATTHEW 5:1-12a

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."



1. EXPLORE IT!

In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches us the Beatitudes with the Sermon on the Mount. Living the Beatitudes is a way of life which will bring us greater goods. There are eight beatitudes for us to follow, and each of them serves its own salvation. To be comforted, inherit the land, satisfied, shown mercy, see God, be children of God, and receive the kingdom of heaven - all of these are the promises we will have when we keep the beatitudes. Jesus teaches us that those who suffer in the name of God, will be blessed and will receive the greatest gift in Heaven.

2. CONNECT IT!

Jesus gives us the eight Beatitudes just like God gave Moses the Ten Commandments as a guide for us to follow. Living a life of suffering, just like St. Theresa of the Child Jesus. She took everything that happened in her life as a blessing for her, even the things that would normally make us mad, St. Theresa would take that as a way of finding joy in pain, as life challenges her to live life as a Saint.

Who do you think first when you feel down?
Your parents? Your friends? Or God?

Do you yearn for forgiveness when you commit a sin? Do you wish for comfort?

How do you feel when you show humility and gentleness to your friends?

Do you desire to be friends with those you like? Do you wish the same with God?

Do you feel relieved when you receive mercy? Do you want others to deserve the same?

Do you feel closer to God when you avoid deadly sins?

How do you feel after making up with your friends?

When you do the sign of cross at school, do you proudly show that you are a child of God?

3. REFLECT IT!

Beatitude is Latin for "an abundant happiness". The Beatitudes that Jesus teaches call us to a radically new way of being when we center our lives on God, we will be transformed, and we will find true happiness and deepest of joy in God. The beatitudes are pathways of living and leading us to long for a deeper relationship with God. How much do we long for a closer relationship with God? What draws us closer to God? Facing suffering and pain in life, does that draw us away from God?

4. LIVE IT! [SUFFERING]

The state of undergoing pain, distress, or hardship.

Each of the beatitudes itself allow a new perspective when we incur suffering, whether it happens through others, through circumstance, or through change. It doesn't protect us from suffering, but to potentially see a silver lining, and how to ideally conduct ourselves in His love. Each night, think about suffering you felt during the day, and try to see if a piece of it can be linked and provide a change of perspective with one of the beatitudes. At the end of the week, look back, reflect, and ask yourself if leaning and learning the beatitudes allowed or didn't allow you to persevere and become stronger. Be sure to share, and see how others took on this challenge!

5. REMEMBER IT!

"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

(Matthew 5:12)



6. PRAY IT!

Dear Lord in Heaven,
As we gather here to learn about the beauty of the Beatitudes, please help us to understand more about this beautiful teaching so that we can bring ourselves closer to You. It is not easy to live in suffering. But we ask You to guide us to the right path, to be able to gracefully live in You, to have a clean heart that we can love You. Amen.

BECOME SALT & LIGHT FOR JESUS

Jesus said to his disciples:

"You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."



1. Explore It!

Before we start to explore today's Gospel, we should take note that just before Jesus was talking about the metaphors of salt and light, He introduced the Sermon on the Mount. The beatitudes are what Jesus wants out of each and every one of us. He wants us to be righteous and learn His values. Jesus teaches us about His ideal values and now we will dive into what Jesus wants us to be. Jesus wants us to be His salt and light of the world so that we may go out and be a shining example of the values he shared in His beatitudes.

2. Connect It!

"You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world."

Salt is a very important substance in the world. Salt is used for preserving food, it enhances flavor and texture, and it serves as a catalyst to melt ice. Salt needs to come in contact with food or ice for change to occur. In order for us to be effective, we need to come into contact with people in our everyday life. Jesus wants us to evangelize and to preserve our sacred traditions.

Light is also a very important. If there is no light, how would we see others' good works, and how would we see the beautiful things this world has to offer? We cannot! Taking advantage of light amidst darkness is important, but being the light of Christ is equally important. We are all called to be witnesses of His light through our prayers, sufferings, joys, and works, and it is important for everyone to see it as well.

3. Reflect It!

Preserving our sacred traditions while sharing them with everyone around us takes time. Not everything in the world can go perfect, but we have to be humble and patient. Nonetheless, we should never be afraid if we hit an obstacle while we are trying to be the salt and light of the world. Rather, we should always continue to strive and show our actions so others can witness them. We are the salt and the light of the world and in the heart of Jesus.



4. Live It! → [Role Model]

Role Model — A person that is looked up to by others as an example to strive for.

Jesus is our ultimate role model. He is the definition of what a role model is because of the way He taught and lived. We can gain so much from everything He teaches. In today's Gospel, He wants us all to be the salt and light of the world.

This week, think of how you can be a role model to others around you, especially to your friends and family. Act on those thoughts. Try to preserve our sacred traditions, while touching the lives of others through God.

We can be better role models by understanding Jesus' values and imitating his actions. Jesus has many qualities; he is compassionate, humble, forgiving, and prayerful. All those qualities will help us to become better role models for others to follow.



5. REMEMBER IT!

"Your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

6. Pray It!

Jesus, You gave us the opportunity to be sweet voices to the world. We try to imitate what You do so that we can make the world a better place. Everything we do is all for You and it is a blessing to keep You in our hearts. Continue to lead us down the right path and keep the light illuminating in us as we become role models for Your people. We pray to the Lord. Amen.

JESUS' Teaching About The Law

Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets: I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven. I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

"You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, You shall not kill, and whoever kills will be liable to judgment. But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; and whoever says to his brother, 'Raqa,' will be answerable to the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.

"You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to

sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna.

"It was also said, Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce. But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife – unless the marriage is unlawful – causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

"Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow, But I say to you, do not swear at all; not by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Do not swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black. Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one."



1. Explore It!

Jesus helps us understand more about God's commands. He affirms He did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the prophets, but to fulfill them. He hopes we understand the laws more so we can live a better life to please God.

The most important commands for us are:

- Love one another: forgive or reconcile with the person who wronged you
- Make good to the Lord all that you vow: live righteously, and say the truth always

2. Connect It!

"Country has country's laws, family has family's rules" is an idiom in Vietnam. The idiom insists the importance of the law in life: law helps to keep things in order and provide peace in society. The Catholic Church also has laws based on the teachings of Jesus in the Scripture. It helps us to live faithfully and righteously towards salvation. As a Catholic, we follow and obey God's commands, and the Catholic Church's law.

One of the easiest ways to see this in practice is through our VEYM training. The VEYM's Ten Vows provides a great guideline on becoming good Christians and citizens.

3. Reflect It!

Among of Ten Commandments of God, Jesus' teachings to His disciples asks us to partly reflect on the eighth commandment.

- Imagine if everyone you talked to didn't speak with sincerity or honesty?
- That everything had to be criticized, or worse, caused us to be cynical about everything someone says?
- Since God is regarded as the author of truth, the Church believes that we are obligated to honor the truth. How often we fail this commandment? How do we know when we tell a lie?

6. Pray It!

Father, we have often spoken things we did not mean and things that sounded good, but were not purely true. Forgive us, Lord. Please give us the tongue of the wise. Give us the conscience to speak the truth without tolerating lies, deceit or even a slight exaggeration in our communication. Scripture tells us that our words have power, so help us bring life to it with our words. Illuminate our words so they shine with the truth. Then, Lord, when we speak of You and Your power and Your love, those who hear us will know and understand that we are a person of our words, and that our words can be trusted. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

4. Live It! [TRUTHFULNESS]

being accurate, or expressing honesty

An easy way to live this virtue is to pay attention to your thoughts and examine our actions to see if we do honor the truth every day. How often we fail? Where? Or with whom do we fail?

Each night, reflect and come up with a resolution whenever we felt we fell short of living up to this virtue.

5. Remember It!

**"Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,'
and your 'No' mean 'No.'
Anything more is from
the evil one."
(Matthew 5:37)**

JESUS' Teaching About Loving Enemies

Jesus said to his disciples: "You have heard that it was said, *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*. But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one as well. If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand over your cloak as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go for two miles. Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow.



"You have heard that it was said, *You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy*. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."

1. EXPLORE IT!

There is a sense of duality here that should not be overlooked. A Catholic classic, it is stated, "If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also." And "if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well." In turning the other cheek, we do not retaliate, in giving our coat along

with our shirt, we give them more than what they asked for. The first part of this passage describes not retaliating against our enemies, but instead describes giving to those who ask from you.

The passage continues by talking about loving people the same way

God does, perfectly and completely. What good does it do if we only love those who love us? Would we not create a better world if we loved those who do not love us, too? Just as God causes the sun to rise on the evil as much as the good, we should love our enemies just as we love our friends.

2. CONNECT IT!

What do you think of when you see a picture of the heart? Would you think of love when you see it? Who do you love? Do you love your parents? Do you love your brother or sister? How about your best friend? Do you love your teacher? It is easy to love these people, because they love us too.

Are there any boys or girls who are mean to you? Has anyone ever said something about you that was not true? Do you love those boys and girls? Should we be expected to love people who are mean to us, treat us badly, and say bad things about us?

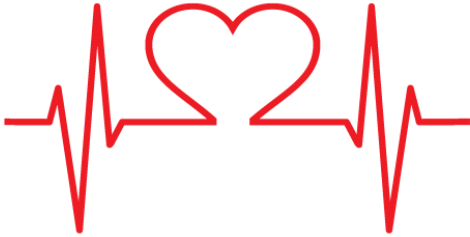
Jesus teaches us how to love our enemies. "The Sermon on the Mount" is a well-known sermon that Jesus teaches us how to love. He said, "You have heard that you should love your neighbors and hate your enemies," Jesus said. "But I say, love your enemies -- and if someone does mean and hateful things to you, pray for them."

Why should we love our enemies? When we love our enemies, we show the world how to be a son or daughter of God. If we are only be kind to our friends, what is so great about that? Everybody does that!

3. REFLECT IT!

It isn't always easy to love your enemies, but there are some good reasons for doing it.

- It demonstrates the love of God to others.
- It sets a good example for others to follow.
- It turns enemies into friends.



- + Do I still care for my friends who have hurt and offended me?
- + Am I willing to continue loving people who do not love me in return?
- + Am I striving to be perfect as God is perfect?
- + Do I believe that loving one's enemy is the way to God?

Loving your enemies is a joke to most people. "How can that be?" people would ask. Enemies are enemies and why would you want to love your enemies. However, Jesus' lesson to His disciples about the new commandment of love—love your enemies. The old way of dealing with our enemy is now changed through Jesus.

4. LIVE IT [PERFECTION]

PERFECTION - entirely without any flaws, defects, or shortcomings; thorough, complete.

Jesus teaches us to be kind to everyone, not just our friends. We must pray for them. While many will render good for good, we must render good for evil. It is the duty of Christians to desire, and aim at, and press towards perfection in grace and holiness.

5. REMEMBER IT!

*"So be perfect,
just as your
heavenly Father
is perfect."
(Matthew 5:48)*

6. PRAY IT!

Father, it is easy to love those who love us. We recognize that being perfect is impossible, but it is the effort we put in that matters. Help us be closer to You and love our enemies so that they might know that we are Your children. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT LOYALTY TO GOD



"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the

birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow, is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

1. EXPLORE IT!

"I am the Lord, your God. You shall not have other gods besides me." Remember the 10 Commandments? Through this passage, we can see that it sounds very much the same as the First Commandment.

Jesus reminds His disciples to attend exclusively to the service of God and should not be distracted from this concentration. Jesus also reminds His disciples not to let worldly things overcome them, rather to trust in God's guidance and do all they can to seek eternal life.

2. CONNECT IT!

Live in the present, mindful of the NOW.

As we get older, we begin to have a lot more temptations in our lives where we fall into prioritizing other things above God. And we forget to put God in the center of our life. However, when we connect this passage to the First Commandment, and reflect on it, it will help us to prioritize things in our lives such as devoting our time to prayers and Sunday mass.

The second theme of today's passage does not excuse us from earning a living. We are required to earn the necessities of life, but the accumulation of material possessions. We use those things to achieve our purpose of life which is to praise, reverence, and serve God (St. Ignatius' reflection)

*Go created us
to praise, reverence and serve God
and this way to save our souls.
God created all of the rest of creation
to help us achieve the purpose for which
God created us.*

3. REFLECT IT!

- † Do you find yourself being too involved in things that you forget about God and all the important people in your life?
- † Do you allow your fears to take over yourself and your trust in God?
- † Are you acting in ways that God would want to see you act?

4. LIVE IT! [LOYALTY]

Loyalty - a feeling of strong support, of gratefulness for someone or something.

Being grateful for what we have can help develop loyalty. Give a prayer of thanks for the ordinary and extraordinary in our lives each day.

We feel a sense of loyalty to our good friends because we know that they are always there for us, in good times and in bad times. We are grateful for their friendship because they help us to be a better version of ourselves.

5. REMEMBER IT!

**“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”
(Matthew 6:33)**

6. PRAY IT!



As we go to school or as we simply go about our lives, there are so many things that distract us, so many worries and fears, so much pain and suffering. Grant us and those around us peace that surpasses all understanding, trust in Your divine plan, and courage to be loyal to you no matter what. We love You so much God and are so thankful for everything we have, and especially for Your love. May Your love continue to guide us on everything we do. Amen.

LISTENING AND ACTING ON JESUS' TEACHING

WEEK A - 09

Matthew 7:21-27

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?' Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.'

"Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined."

1. EXPLORE IT!

In today's Gospel, Jesus declares that not everyone who claims to follow Christ will share in the glory of heaven. Many of these false prophets will speak and act in the name of Jesus, yet live immorally themselves. The same follows for any person who hears the words of Jesus and does not build upon His words on solid foundation, but rather let it crumble away like a house built on sand.



2. CONNECT IT!

At a church meeting, a very wealthy man rose to tell the rest of those present about his Christian faith.

"I'm a millionaire," he said, "and I attribute it all to the rich blessings of God in my life. I remember that turning point in my faith. I had just earned my first dollar, and I went to a church meeting that night. The speaker was a missionary who told about his work. I knew that I only had a dollar bill and had to either give it all to God's work or nothing at all. So at that moment, I decided to give my whole dollar to God. I believe that God blessed that decision, and that is why I am a rich man today."

He finished, and there was an awed silence at his testimony as he moved toward his seat. As he sat down a little old lady sitting in the same pew leaned over and said to him: "I dare you to do it again."

3. REFLECT IT!

Are you a true disciple of Jesus? Do you walk the walk, or do you just talk the talk? It is not easy to be a true disciple of Jesus. We can go to VEYM meeting each weekend, go to mass each Sunday, pray each night, and give alms during Lent; but somehow we still fall short of the glory of God. Christ is calling us always to have a conversion in our hearts back towards Him - that is, to always turn back towards Christ when we stray.

In what part of your life do you see needing a conversion of your heart?

5. REMEMBER IT!

“Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.”
(Matthew 7:24)

4. LIVE IT!

[PRUDENCE]

PRUDENCE - *The ability to discern not just what is truly good, but also the morally right way to achieve that goodness.*

Knowing what is good is not enough; we must always do what is good. What is one big decision you must make this month you are unsure of? Take some time to think about what you think is right, and don't forget to consult with God about your decision!

6. PRAY IT!

Lord, help me to stay true and steadfast to Your teachings. Help me to know in my heart what is truly good, so that my mind, my words, and my acts reflect Your presence in my life always. Amen.



The Temptation of Jesus

WEEK A - L1
MATTHEW 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." He said in reply, "It is written: 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you' and 'with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "Again it is written, and 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'" Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: 'The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.'" Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.



1. Explore It!

During Jesus' journey into the desert for 40 days and nights, He was challenged physically, mentally, and spiritually by the devil three times. The first temptation, the devil appealed to Jesus' natural needs and invited Jesus to turn the stones to bread to break His fast and soothe His hunger. The second temptation, the devil took Jesus to the holy city and told Jesus that if He was the Son of God, then He should cast Himself down to see whether or not God will provide angels to protect and save Him. The final temptation, the devil took Jesus to a high mountain and in effort to get Jesus to worship him in return of the kingdoms of the world—lust for power. In the end, the devil finally leaves knowing that he cannot tempt Jesus with these actions.

2. Connect It!

Based off of the three failed temptations attempted by the devil, we as Nghia Si can simply related back how to overcome them in reality like how Jesus had in the passage. We've learned through the temptations that we cannot solely live off of materialist items, personal benefits, and power, but through the word and love of God. As Nghia Si, we are tempted by many things daily: friends, family, the things we see on TV, social media, but we have to remember that we are servants of God and that He is not our puppet on a string. All this should give us great assurance that our Lord will never leave us alone in the middle of our hardships and trials. He is with us...whether we may not see Him. We should always place our trust in God for His help so we do not fall into the temptations from the devil and society.

3. Reflect It!

Because we are surrounded everyday with school, work, social media, and influences from our friends, we often forget what is the meaning and purpose of our lives. Is it money, fame, or power? Is it our quest to achieve for the best and to be the best? Remember that when you allow your temptations to win over your love for God, you will ultimately lose.

4. Live It!

[Perseverance]

The will to see things through until the end in spite of fear, obstacles, discouragement, and opposition

With perseverance, we can defeat temptation.

For this week, in order to persevere and overcome the challenges thrown at us, nourish your spirituality and believe that God will guide you through all obstacles. Reflect over how many times you were tempted each day and how were you able to resist those temptations.

5. Remember It!

**“The Lord, your God,
shall you worship and him
alone shall you serve.”**
(Matthew 5:10)

6. Pray It!

Dear Jesus: *“Teach me to love trials and repute them of small account to attain Your favor, O Lord, who hesitated not to die for me. O my Beloved, all that is rough and toilsome I desire for myself, and all that is sweet and delectable I desire for You.”*
(John of the Cross). Amen.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS



Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very

much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and do not be afraid." And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone. As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, "Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

1. EXPLORE IT!

Today's Gospel tells us about Jesus' Transfiguration: Jesus' appearance in radiant glory. This story is depicted only in the Synoptic Gospels. The setting is this: Jesus knows His Passion and Death will bring dismay to His disciples and He also knows that His Resurrection will give them hope. To prepare them, He took the three disciples up to a high mountain to show them what death, or the "end" of life, means. His Transfiguration is a revelation of the glorious kingdom, a message of hope and encouragement that the "end" of life is not the cessation of life, but it is the purpose or goal of life, and that we will all be transfigured by Christ. He told them not to tell anyone of the vision until the time has come when He is resurrected so that people will believe. The message after the Transfiguration, telling the disciples to "listen to Him," is important because Jesus still has more to teach them before His Passion.

2. CONNECT IT!

Mountains are awe-inspiring natural creations; perhaps because from there we feel closer to the heavens, to God. Mountains have significant value in the Bible: Mount Horeb where God revealed God's self through the burning bush to tell Moses to go free the Israelites and Mount Sinai where God revealed God's self through the peals of thunder and lightning to give Moses the Ten Commandments. On top of those mountains, God revealed God's self to God's people. God also spoke to God's people to teach and guide them with instructions. Similarly, today, Jesus' Transfiguration revealed God's glory and the everlasting life in the everlasting kingdom to Peter, James, and John. The Transfiguration encouraged the disciples to face the foreboding future with the ultimate goal for the end (purpose) of their lives. God then told them to listen to Jesus for He will teach them the way to the new glorious life.

3. REFLECT IT!

Being on top of a mountain helps us to be closer to God and to be able to clearly see God's revelation and listen to God's spoken words. It is also there that God gives us instructions or missions for our lives. We do not have to be on top of a mountain physically to experience God's closeness, we can experience our own "mountain" moments in our prayer life when we are closest to God.

Do you ever feel a special closeness to God? If so, what revelation is it that draws you close?

What encouragement do you receive? Are you able to listen to God's quiet whisperings? What instruction is God giving you to fulfil? Why is it important that God gives you this direction? How crucial is it that you fulfil it?

5. REMEMBER IT!

**“This is my beloved Son,
with whom I am well
pleased; listen to him.”**

(Matthew 17:5)



6. PRAY IT!

O loving God! We thank you for your steadfast love and constant desire to be close to us. Grant us open hearts to receive You and open ears to listen to You, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

4. LIVE IT!

[LISTENING]

Listening – to pay attention; heed; obey.

When God speaks to God's people, God not only wants them to listen but also wants them to heed God's loving instructions. This week, we will pay special attention during Mass for God's instruction. It could be in the songs, the readings, the homily, the prayers, and even from the very person sitting next to you. Find one thing that you think God is telling you to accomplish this week that helps you be a better version of yourself.





JESUS IS THE SOURCE OF LIVING WATER

WEEK A - L3

JOHN 4:5-42



Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well. It was about noon.

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" —For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.— Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the well is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

Jesus said to her, "Go call your husband and come back." The woman answered and said to him, "I do not have a husband." Jesus answered her, "You are right in saying, 'I do not have a husband.' For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet.

Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Anointed; when he comes, he will tell us everything." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking with you."

At that moment his disciples returned, and were amazed that he was talking with a woman, but still no one said, "What are you looking for?" or "Why are you talking with her?" The woman left her water jars and went into the town and said to the people, "Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Messiah?" They went out of the town and came to him. Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." So the disciples said to one another, "Could someone have brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'In four months, the harvest will be here?' I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest. The reaper is already receiving his payment and gathering crops for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together. For here the saying is verified that 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap what you have not worked for; others have done the work, and you are sharing the fruits of their work."

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman, who testified, "He told me everything I have done." When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. Many more began to believe in him because of his word, and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world."

1. EXPLORE IT!

Today's Gospel tells us about the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. The conversation does not only transform the Samaritan woman but also reveals who Jesus is and why He is there: He is the source of living water. Jesus knows what the Samaritan is thirsting for. Thus, He is there to give the living water so [she] will never thirst. Most importantly, Jesus is the Messiah who comes to give us the living water so we will never thirst again. Whoever follows Jesus and drinks His water will have eternal life.

The setting is this: Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at a well in a town of Samaria called Sychar, where He initially just asks her for water. Later, Jesus slowly introduces to her the living water, and the woman starts to ask for that water without knowing she has already tasted it: the words of Jesus, and He Himself. This transforms the woman and she becomes a witness of Jesus, who eagerly runs to the town to spread the Word of God to everyone about the Messiah and His living water. His thirst is for us to believe and accept Him as our Savior — the one and only who can satisfy our thirst.

2. CONNECT IT!

Jesus is the Savior who can give living water to all thirsty sinners. His gift of living water is His Salvation: it is the Lord Himself. Jesus loves the world so much that He suffered crucifixion to save us and bring us to eternal life. In order to accept that gift, we must know who Jesus is and we must ask for it. There are many ways to know Jesus: through the words of God, the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and communication with Him in prayer. As you read the Words of God, open your mind and heart: let the Holy Spirit guide you and listen to what God is saying to you. The more time you spend with Jesus, the better you get to know Him. Through the Sacrament of the Eucharist, Jesus becomes the food and drink that nourishes our soul.

In addition, we must accept ourselves as sinners that we are thirsty and we need Him, the living water to satisfy our thirst. Jesus loves us. We must confess our sins to Him, and ask for forgiven; and if we ask, He is willing to give His gift of living water to us so we can be saved and have an eternal life with Him.

3. REFLECT IT!

- † How much do you know about Jesus? Will it be enough for you to be saved and have an eternal life with Him?
- † Do your friends know about Jesus? If not, how can you bring Jesus to them?

4. LIVE IT!

[ENTHUSIASM]

Enthusiasm — strong excitement about something; a strong feeling of active interest in something that you like or enjoy.

For this week, spend some time to volunteer and reflect on Jesus. Try to attend one Mass during the weekday or participate in Adoration. Ask Jesus to give you the strength to see the positive of any situation handed to you, to have an uplifting energy, and to practice spontaneous acts of kindness.

5. REMEMBER IT!

“My food is to do the will of the one who sent me to finish his work.”

(John 4: 34)

6. PRAY IT!

Dear Jesus, Your deepest thirst is to give the living water to those who ask. Please help us to know who we are, especially to know You and thirst for You — the source of living water. May we always search for You and be able to encounter You in our lives. Jesus, give us Your living water so we will never be thirsty again. Please transform us, use us as Your tools and Your witnesses. May we be able to share Your Love to the people around us. Amen.

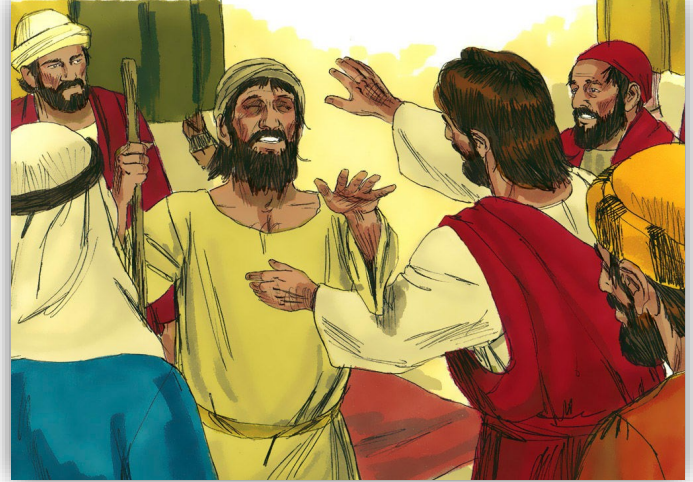
JESUS Cured the Blind

As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him. We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam"—which means Sent—. So he went and washed, and came back able to see.

His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, "Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is," but others said, "No, he just looks like him." He said, "I am." So they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" He replied, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went there and washed and was able to see." And they said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I don't know."

They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees. Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath. So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see." So some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, because he does not keep the sabbath." But others said, "How can a sinful man do such signs?" And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, "What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

Now the Jews did not believe that he had been blind and gained his sight until they summoned the parents of the one who had gained his sight. They asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How does he now see?" His parents answered and said, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. We do not know how he sees now, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him, he is of age; he can speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone acknowledged him as the Christ, he would be expelled from the synagogue. For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; question him."



So a second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give God the praise! We know that this man is a sinner." He replied, "If he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see." So they said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" They ridiculed him and said, "You are that man's disciple; we are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this one is from." The man answered and said to them, "This is what is so amazing, that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if one is devout and does his will, he listens to him. It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do anything." They answered and said to him, "You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out.

When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered and said, "Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "I do believe, Lord," and he worshiped him. Then Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind."

Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not also blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, 'We see,' so your sin remains."

1. EXPLORE IT!

In the past, and probably still to this day, people used to believe being born with an anomaly made you a sinner and is a punishment from God. In this passage, Jesus' disciples saw a blind man and asked Jesus who was to blame for this man's condition. Jesus replied saying nobody was to blame and more so because of his blindness, God's work will be made visible through him. When the formerly blind man appeared to the Pharisees, they were astonished and couldn't believe what happened because he was a sinner. When the blind man was questioned again, he repeated his answer with greater details of his supernatural healing. The Pharisees took this answer as an insult, under the assumption that they were being taught by a sinner which led them to expel the blind man from the synagogue. When Jesus found the man, He told the him "...I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."

2. CONNECT IT!

Despite the miracle of the blind man regaining sight, all the disciples cared about was that a "sinner" suddenly became a free man. Furthermore, they were insulted by the idea of somebody "lower" than them would be their teacher.

Jesus said, "I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." To what He is referring is that no matter how much Jesus may show us the way, there will be people who turn a blind eye to such facts as well as those who will learn and live the word of God.

We can apply this Gospel to our lives by considering how our actions affect our surroundings. Don't look down on people because they have different skills than you. Some people are not as fast of a reader as you are. Instead of ridiculing that person, help him learn so he won't feel discouraged and lesser than anyone. If you are granted with talents, share and teach what God has given you. If you finish all your chores, do a little extra on your free time. These are the challenges and tests God has granted us, therefore it is our job to answer these challenges.

3. REFLECT IT!

In today's society, we may not believe being handicapped is the end result of our sins, but we are still prisoners to our sins. Being perfect is impossible; we will always be surrounded with temptations to sin. Our society can sometimes misconstrue what is wrong to be right and in that case falsely consider certain "sins" to be acceptable. Various examples include abortion, premarital sex, and pornography. Society justifies these actions to be okay but the truth is that they blind us from the true love as Jesus has taught us.

Ask yourself:

- † What movies or TV shows that I have watched condone these behaviors that society deems acceptable but I do not?
- † Have I accepted God's gifts and embraced His love wholly?
- † Have I believed in something I knew was morally wrong but because it was socially acceptable I lived by it and did it?
- † Am I making excuses to spend time with God but have no second thoughts on hanging out with friends?

5. REMEMBER IT!

"Do you believe in the Son of Man?"
(John 9:35)

6. PRAY IT!

Jesus, help us pave a path You would have wanted us to follow. If we were to sway from You, then please help us return home to You and keep our visions upon You. Strengthen our heads, hearts, and spirits from blinding us from You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

4. LIVE IT! [TRUST]

Trust: *firm belief on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something.*

This week, when you feel challenged or weak in spirit, pray for guidance and have full trust in God and His plans for you. Build a valuable and meaningful relationship with your friends.

JESUS RAISES LAZARUS

WEEK A - L5

JOHN 11:1-45



Now a man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and dried his feet with her hair; it was her brother Lazarus who was ill. So the sisters sent word to him, saying, "Master, the one you love is ill." When Jesus heard this he said, "This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was. Then after this he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you, and you want to go back there?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in a day? If one walks during the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks at night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." He said this, and then told them, "Our friend Lazarus is asleep, but I am going to awaken him." So the disciples said to him, "Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved." But Jesus was talking about his death, while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep. So then Jesus said to them clearly, "Lazarus has died. And I am glad for you that I was not there, that you may believe. Let us go to him." So Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go to die with him."

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away. And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary

to comfort them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise." Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, "The teacher is here and is asking for you." As soon as she heard this, she rose quickly and went to him. For Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still where Martha had met him. So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her saw Mary get up quickly and go out, they followed her, presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Sir, come and see." And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him." But some of them said, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?"

So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me." And when he had said this, he cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go." Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him.

1. EXPLORE IT

Today's Gospel talks about an amazing miracle: Jesus resurrected Lazarus. Jesus called Lazarus and he rose up and walked out of his tomb. This event is a foreshadowing of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection after three days in the tomb.

The setting is Jesus and His disciples coming to meet with Martha and Mary at Judea where Lazarus had been very sick.

Judea was a place where the Jews wanted to stone Jesus, but He still came to see Lazarus. When Jesus arrived, Lazarus already passed away. Martha greeted Jesus from far away, and Mary met Jesus at Lazarus' tomb. Jesus wanted His disciples, His friends, and the Jews to believe in Him. Jesus calling Lazarus to rise from the tomb was evidence for people to see with their own eyes and believe in Jesus.

2. CONNECT IT!

Jesus was very sad and heart broken when He heard Lazarus passed away, but He did not rush back to see him. He continued His work and then came to see Lazarus. Have you had anyone pass away? How did you feel? Did you want to rush over to that person to see them one last time, have one last talk, and give one last hug? When Jesus called Lazarus to come out of his tomb, Jesus confirmed what was in Scripture as true. Have you ever doubted what you have learned from your parents? And then you realized that they were right all along? So you believe what they teach you next time and use it later. People will rise on the Last Day. Jesus knew He could wake Lazarus from death, because everyone will rise from death to meet Jesus on Judgment Day. Jesus also confirmed He is God, and He has the power to defy death.

5. REMEMBER IT!

*"I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. THE ONE WHO BELIEVES IN ME WILL LIVE, EVEN THOUGH THEY DIE."
(JOHN 11: 25)*

6. PRAY IT!

Dear Lord, Your love for Lazarus can't be described in words or pictures. We believe in Your teaching, the way to live a good Christian life. Please give us strength to forgive others and courage to love everyone around us. So that we all will be in Your paradise on the Last Day.
Amen.

3. REFLECT IT!

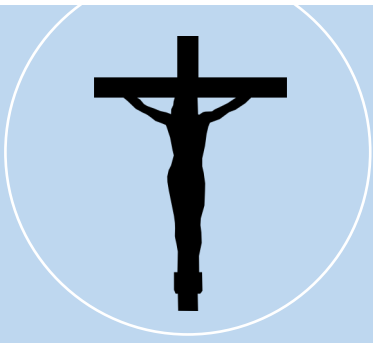
We are doing things we believe in, and we are doing them without questioning what others think. How did God speak to you through your friends and family? We believe in our family; they teach us the truth and right away to do things in life. Did you recognize God's word through their words and actions? We believe in our friend, believe their stories, and the way they treat us like a family. Do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe His life story is real? If you do believe, do you apply His teaching in your daily life?

4. LIVE IT! [CARING]

Caring - feeling or showing concern for other people.

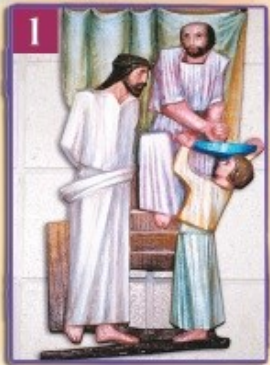
This week, when you see a family member or a friend who is feeling down or sad, remember how Jesus too felt sad for those around Him who were hurt. Try to find ways to be caring and compassionate towards those who are hurt and offer up a prayer to Jesus for them.



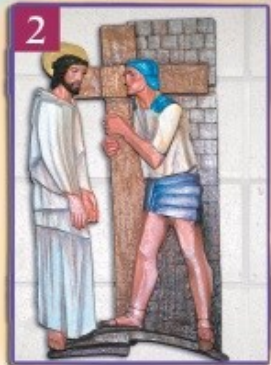


WEEK A – PALM / PASSION SUNDAY
MATTHEW 26:14-27:66

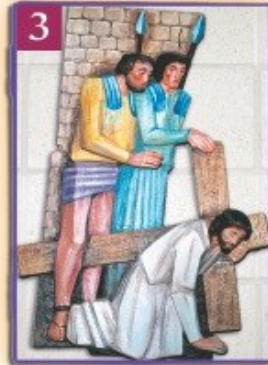
THE PASSION OF CHRIST



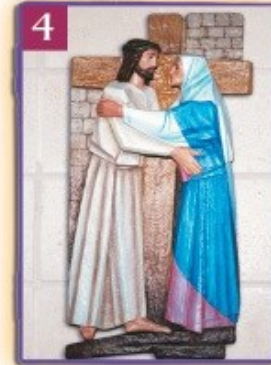
1 Jesus is condemned to death.



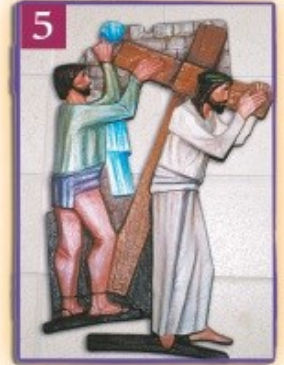
2 Jesus takes up His cross.



3 Jesus falls the first time



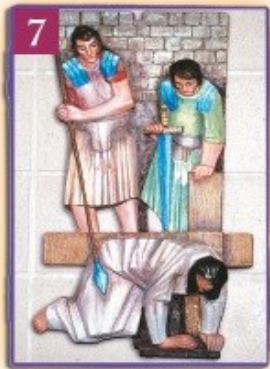
4 Jesus meets His mother



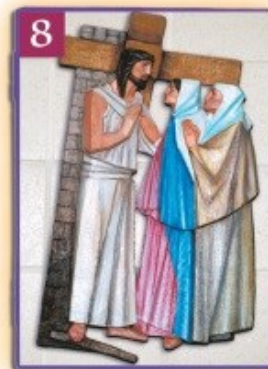
5 Simon helps Jesus carry the cross.



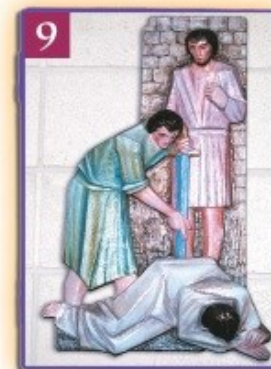
6 Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.



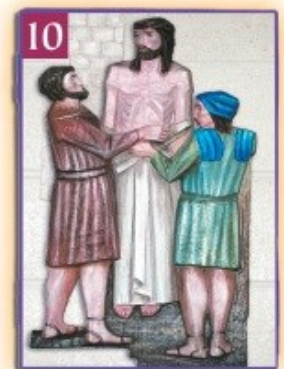
7 Jesus falls the second time.



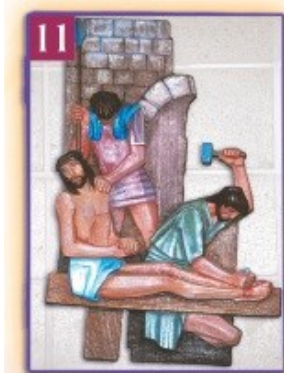
8 Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem.



9 Jesus falls the third time.



10 Jesus is stripped of His clothing.



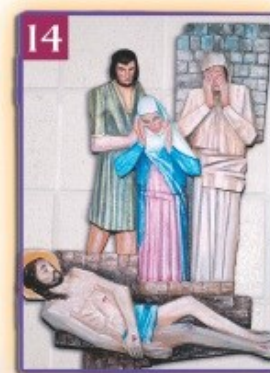
11 Jesus is nailed to the cross.



12 Jesus dies on the cross.



13 Jesus is taken down from the cross.



14 Jesus is buried in the tomb.

1. EXPLORE IT!

Today's Gospel talks about Jesus' Passion. It first starts off with the Last Supper. This is where Jesus shares his Body and his Blood with us, creating the new and everlasting covenant with His disciples. During the Supper, Jesus says that one of the disciples will deny Him three times before the rooster crows. Of course we later find out that it was Peter who denied Jesus when He was arrested. Soon after, Jesus was condemned to die on the cross. Now the cross that Jesus had to bear represents the weight of our sins. He carried it on His shoulders and on His back because He loves us and wishes to take it away.

3. REFLECT IT!

Remember that God sent down His only son to save us. We did not ask for such a savior but through God's love we received it. Have you ever felt that you have been betrayed by a friend or denied something you've wanted? How did that make you feel? Remember in the passage that Peter denied knowing Jesus even though He was one of His followers. Jesus forgave Peter for His actions. Forgiveness is a strong virtue that we must have. Remember that God forgives us for everything that we do when we repent.

5. REMEMBER IT!

**"AMEN, I SAY TO YOU,
ONE OF YOU WILL
BETRAY ME."
(MATTHEW 26:21)**

2. CONNECT IT!

In this reading, we find that Peter, the one who we thought would be the most loyal to Jesus, denied knowing Him. Sometimes we also deny God without even thinking about it. For example, before every meal we are supposed to do the Sign of the Cross and say grace. At school, how many of you actually do this? Sometimes we find that it is embarrassing to do this action and forget to do it completely. This is an example of denying God. Will God forgive us? Of course, but only if we repent. Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins. Remember that

- God works in small ways and it is only fair that we give back to Him by doing nice little things too. Have you ever talked about a friend behind their back or not be honest with a family member? That too is a form of betrayal!

4. LIVE IT!

[LOYALTY]

Loyalty is a strong feeling of support or allegiance. It is in your mind and heart. Loyalty can be demanding and involve sacrifice. It is a form of love and is directed to another person or cause.

Be loyal to your friends and family.
Be loyal to God, our Father.
Do not turn your back on them.
For they need you as much as you need them.

6. PRAY IT!

Heavenly Father, I ask that You bring down the Holy Spirit. I ask that You continue to guide us and put us on the right path. I also ask that You give us the courage to proclaim Your word and to spread the fire that You have put in our souls. Watch over us as we continue our journey to seek You. You have blessed us with Your love and sacrifice. We thank you Lord. Amen.

JESUS Rises From the Dead

WEEK A - E1
JOHN 20:1-9



On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one

who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

1. Explore It!

The focus of today's Gospel is about Jesus' resurrection. Today is the day that Mary of Magdala visits the tomb where Jesus' body was laid only to discover that the tomb had been opened. Today is the day that Peter and another disciple hastily ran to the tomb upon hearing Mary of Magdala's news, only to see the burial cloths not in the same place where they had laid Jesus. Today is the day that everyone believes Jesus is truly risen!

2. Connect It!

There are several times in the Bible where Jesus tells His disciples things and they do not believe until they see it. Take Thomas for example. Thomas is known for not believing it was Jesus who came to visit until he was able to put his finger through the hole in Jesus' hands, left by the nails from the crucifixion. Similarly, in our lives there are times where we do certain things but do not fully believe until we are able to physically see or experience the situation. Sometimes our prayers are not answered right away and we may even become discouraged from continuing to talk with Him, thinking our wishes will not be granted. Jesus wants us to put our confidence and trust in Him, all the time, in everything. We need to lean on Him for help with everything in our lives.

3. Reflect It!

Jesus' resurrection is a sign of rebirth, renewal, and forgiveness. Often times we question Jesus for the struggles we have to face but do not realize that He is there every step of the way to get us through those challenges. Have you ever encountered a situation where you doubted Jesus and His presence in your life? Have you ever questioned why you have to overcome certain obstacles? What was the answer that you came up with and how did it relate to Jesus' plans for you? It is important that we remember to stand firm and be strong in our faith because Jesus is always there for you, even when you can't see him!

4. Live It!

[**Belief**]

Belief: trust, faith, or confidence in someone or something.

Although the second disciple arrived at the tomb before Peter, he did not enter the tomb because he was taken back by the burial cloths left inside the tomb. Upon entering the tomb however, by seeing the burial cloths, he instantly recognized and believed that Jesus has risen from the dead.

5. Remember It!

*"Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed."
(John 20:8)*

6. Pray It!

Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for all You have blessed us with. Everything we are today is through the work of Your mercy and the fruits of Your grace. Though we are weak and though we may falter, help us to always stand firm in our faith and always believe in You and Your presence around us. Open our minds and hearts so that we may believe without having to see. In Your holy name. Amen.

JESUS Strengthened the Faith of Thomas

WEEK A - E2
JOHN 20:19-31

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

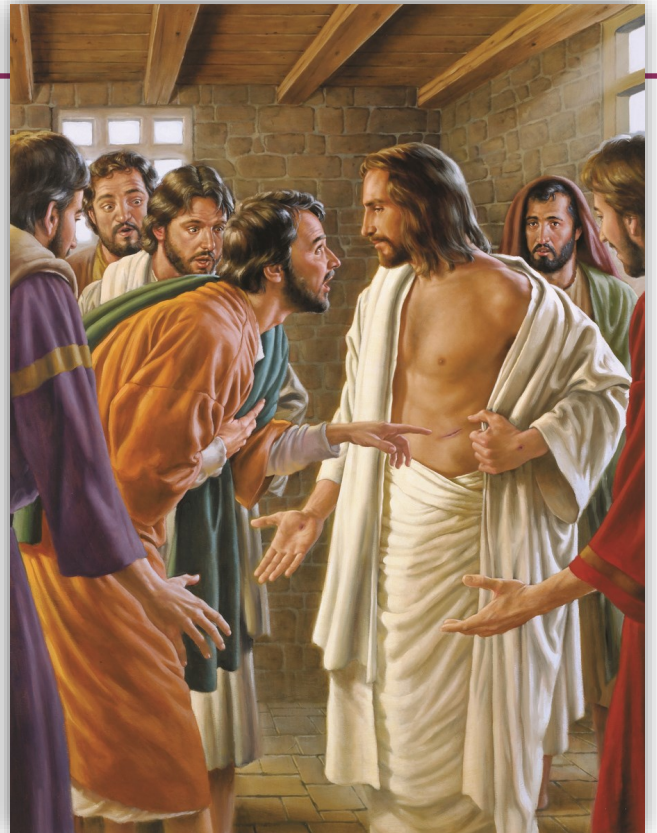
Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

1. Explore It!

Today's Gospel tells us about Thomas and how he doubted the resurrection of Jesus. Thomas wanted to have concrete proof that Jesus was indeed risen from the dead. He was not going to trust what the disciples told him about the resurrection; he wanted to see for himself the risen Christ. Jesus saw this, came to Thomas, and strengthened Thomas' faith.

The setting is this: Jesus has risen from the dead and visited the disciples. At that time, Thomas was not there. Therefore, he doubted that the others had seen the Lord. He wanted to see Jesus for himself. Seeing that, Jesus came to Thomas and had him touch the Lord's wounds to show that it is truly Him. Because of this, he came to the realization that he had falsely doubted.



2. Connect It!

A college student was in a philosophy class which had a discussion about God's existence. The professor presented the following logic:

"Has anyone in this class heard God?" Nobody spoke.

"Has anyone in this class touched God?" Again, nobody spoke.

"Has anyone in this class seen God?" When nobody spoke for the third time, he simply stated, "Then there is no God."

One student thought for a second, and then asked for permission to reply. Curious to hear this bold student's response, the professor granted it, and the student stood up and asked the following questions of his classmates:

"Has anyone in this class heard our professor's brain?" Silence.

"Has anyone in this class touched our professor's brain?" Again, silence.

"Has anyone in this class seen our professor's brain?"

When nobody in the class dared to speak, the student concluded, "Then, according to our professor's logic, it must be true that our professor has no brain!"

There will be many occasions in our lives where we doubt. When we don't hear, see, or touch something, it makes it harder for us to always believe it exists. Our faith waivers and we lose our place with God but we need to take Thomas' experience as a lesson, as a reminder that just because we can't see, touch or hear our "brain," doesn't mean it's not there.

3. Reflect It!

Believing without seeing is something far beyond our comprehension but it is a gift from the Lord nonetheless. We as Catholics, are here to go forth and light the world on fire. We're called to attract the blind and help them see. Think. Have you ever doubted the existence of God? What can we do to be more faithful in Christ? What does God think about our doubts? Sometimes, we may fall into that path where we may not believe it until we see something with our eyes; however, sometimes, we must have faith in order to believe in it. In order to understand our own doubt, we must understand what we mean by "faith".

4. Live It!

[faith]

Complete trust, confidence and strong belief in our faith, Catholicism, in God.

This week, focus on truly living the Eucharistic Day. In the morning, give thanks for your night and offer your day up to him. During the day, take time out to spend with God. Go to mass if possible and receive Holy Communion. Finally, at night, thank the Lord for your day and make perfect contrition. Through living a Eucharistic Day, we're practicing our faith and in that we gain a better understanding of it to better understand our own doubts.

5. Remember It!

"...Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

(Luke 20:29)

6. Pray It!

Lord, I believe: I wish to believe in Thee. Lord, let my faith be full and unreserved, and let it penetrate my thought, my way of judging Divine things and human things. Lord, let my faith be joyful and give peace and gladness to my spirit, and dispose it for prayer with God and conversation with men, so that the inner bliss of its fortunate possession may shine forth in sacred and secular conversation. Lord, let my faith be humble and not presume to be based on the experience of my thought and of my feeling; but let it surrender to the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and not have any better guarantee than in docility to Tradition and to the authority of the magisterium of the Holy Church. Amen.

JESUS on the Road to Emmaus

WEEK A - E3
LUKE 24:13-35

That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they

were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took



bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

1. Explore It!

In today's Gospel, two of Jesus' disciples were walking to the village of Emmaus. To put things into context, this was three days after Jesus was crucified. Everyone was still grieving, including the two disciples. These men felt hopeless, sad, and confused. Jesus appeared to them and joined them on their walk; however, the men were not able to recognize that it was the Messiah. Although the two disciples did not recognize Jesus, they knew they were in the presence of holiness, and they welcomed the man to join them on their journey. That night, while everyone was seated around the table, the unknown man took bread, blessed it, broke it, and then gave it to them. At this very moment, the two men finally understood and recognized the risen Jesus in their presence. Then He disappeared.

2. Connect It!

When else do you hear bread being taken, blessed, broken, and then given to people? Of course, the Holy Mass we attend on Sundays! Jesus instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist during the Last Supper and this Eucharistic celebration can be seen during the travel to Emmaus. The Road to Emmaus is one of the earliest forms of the holy mass.

Many elements of the mass rites — the Introductory Rite, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of Eucharist, and the Concluding Rite - may be seen during this story. When the two travelers invited Jesus, this demonstrates how we too must invite Jesus Christ into our hearts and minds. When Jesus shared scripture with the travellers, it shows us how important it is to understand and live the Word of God. When Jesus broke bread with the travellers, it shows us the importance of living in communion with God. Finally, when the two men quickly returned to Jerusalem to tell everyone what they had experienced, it demonstrates the importance of evangelization and spreading the good news of the Lord to everyone.

4. Live It! [UNDERSTANDING]

Understanding: comprehension; one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that gives us a deeper insight and penetration of divine truths held by faith, and to help us recognize how God wants us to live.

When we communicate with our friends and they're telling us a story, we're making an attempt to understand them. Communicating with God through prayer is the same thing. Whether they are challenges or joy occasions, take a step back and try to understand the blessing in the situation you are given.

Try to recognize God in all aspects of life! Next time you talk to your parents, and they say something you may not agree with. Take a deep breath. Reflect and try to understand. Where is God in this situation? Could what your parents be saying be just them looking out for you? Chances are, they want the best for you. That's God's way of working through your parents.

3. Reflect It!

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by school? Has your friend not been treating you as well as you would like? We are given many of these situations in life. There will be moments when you are sad or just simply feeling down. The disciples walking on the road to Emmaus, before meeting Jesus, were sad and discouraged as well. However, by welcoming Jesus alongside their journey, the two men were able to find joy and fulfillment. When was the last time you truly invited God into your heart? We need to strive to be like the two disciples and allow the Lord to open our minds and hearts to joy and wisdom in the Holy Scripture. If the Emmaus disciples had enough understanding and faith to see and recognize Jesus Christ when he broke the bread, we should increase our understanding and faith to recognize Jesus in all aspects of our life.

5. Remember It!

**"But they urged him, 'Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them."
(Luke 24:29)**

6. Pray It!

Thank you for being there for us. We are grateful for Your presence. We ask You to grant us with vision to recognize You more in our life. We ask You to grant us the ability to understand You. Please touch our hearts. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

JESUS IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

WEEK A - E4
JOHN 10:1-10

Jesus said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers." Although Jesus used this figure of speech, the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them. So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."



1. EXPLORE IT!

The relationship between the sheep and their shepherd is based on familiarity. Sheep recognize their shepherd and will not follow a stranger. At the end of the day, shepherds lead their sheep from pastures to a common gated area called a sheepfold. There, one shepherd protects all of the sheep until the next day when each shepherd returns to lead his own sheep to pasture. As shepherds move among the sheep, the sheep follow only their shepherd.

2. CONNECT IT!

Today's Gospel gives us the opportunity to reflect on Christian leadership. Jesus' words suggest to us that those who will lead the Christian community will be known by their faithfulness to Jesus. The leaders will recognize that Jesus is the gate for all of the sheep and that having a good relationship with Jesus is the primary characteristic of a Christian leader. Jesus' allegory also suggests that faithful Christian leadership requires a good relationship with the community: the shepherd knows his sheep, and they know him. Christian leaders follow the example of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, by being faithful to him and by following in his footsteps.

3. REFLECT IT!

The fourth Sunday of Easter is sometimes called Good Shepherd Sunday because in the Gospel reading for this Sunday, Jesus talks about what it means to be the shepherd of the sheep. Shepherds and sheep have a close relationship. Sheep will only follow their own shepherd; they recognize his voice and will not follow a stranger. The shepherd's duty is to protect his sheep. Amidst all the different distractions in life, how do you recognize Jesus' voice and desires for you? How do you distance yourself from "strangers" – people who bring you away from Jesus? How can you follow in Jesus' footsteps in being a good shepherd?

5. REMEMBER IT!

"A good shepherd
lays down his life for
the sheep."

(John 10:11)

6. PRAY IT!

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters; He restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for His Name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff - they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies, You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord. My whole life long. Amen.

4. LIVE IT!

[RECOGNITION]

the perception of something as existing or true; realization; the acknowledgement of something as valid or as entitled to consideration.

This week try to recognize moments in your day throughout the week where you feel Jesus in your life. It can be in a friend or someone doing something nice to you or you seeing someone do something nice for other people. Think about what God is trying to show you.

WHO IS JESUS?

WEEK A - E5

JOHN 14:1-12



Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where I am going you know the way." Thomas said to him, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father."

1. Explore It!

In the Gospel this week, Jesus explains to His disciples that He will be going ahead to prepare for them a place in Heaven. He is speaking of His ascension to heaven that is to take place soon. Without explicitly stating that He would be leaving them again, Jesus tells His disciples to be vigilant and to have faith in Him and in God. In having this steadfast faith, we

might know "the way and the truth and the life" through Jesus Christ who goes ahead to prepare the way for us to be in paradise with God. And just as Jesus is in the Father and the Father in Him, we too have Jesus in us each time we receive the Eucharist and we in Christ. Therefore we are also with the Father who is with Jesus.

2. Connect It!

Today's Gospel reading is a reminder that our goal each and every day is to come closer and closer to being reunited with God in heaven. Jesus even goes further as to give us the ultimate key to achieving this goal: Himself! Through His death and resurrection, which we celebrate during this season of Easter, Jesus has bought for us the way to heaven. Jesus is the authentic role model that we should follow and model our lives after through all of His actions in fulfilling the will of the Father so that we may one day be reunited with God in heaven.

3. Reflect It!

Through Jesus, we know that He is "the way and the truth and the life". By believing in His sacrifice and Word, we are able to have a path to go toward heaven, but it isn't a straight path. It requires prayer, sacrifice, and doing good works. As you go about your week, think about Jesus as the way, the truth and the life. How is His life an example for you to live your life authentically? When you go to mass or when you pray, what is God trying to tell you in these moments? Do you feel like you are taking steps (however big or small) closer to your Father in heaven?

4. Live It [**AUTHENTICITY**]

AUTHENTICITY – *genuineness; being true to oneself*

As Catholics, we strive to understand God's will every day and this doesn't mean being fake and pretending that we know everything that God plans for us. If we don't know, then be authentic about it. This means that if you don't understand, pray to God for understanding. If you do understand, be humble about it and do your best to carry out God's will. Demonstrate your authenticity by showing God's love to others wholeheartedly and sincerely.

5. Remember It!

**"I am the way and the truth and the life."
(John 14:6)**

6. Pray It!

Dear Jesus, thank you for the gift of life that You have bought for us. You truly are the way, the truth, and the life. Grant that we may follow in Your footsteps and by Your example we may come closer toward reaching our goal of being reunited with You in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

If You Love JESUS



If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.



1. Explore It!

As the disciples are having the Last Supper with Jesus, Jesus is consoling the disciples prior to His departure. Jesus is also preparing the disciples to receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus talks about the Father giving another Advocate to help the disciples. Jesus is the first advocate in the sense of an intercessor to heaven. The second advocate is a teacher, a witness to Jesus, and represents the continued spirit on earth of the Jesus who has returned to the Father.

2. Connect It!

Jesus teaches us that we are all connected to God the Father through Him. In following His teachings we all become closer to achieving the kingdom of God as well as closer to God the Father. Although Jesus is no longer fleshly present on this Earth, we are left with His word and teaching. Also, He has not left us alone, but through the sacrament of confirmation we are all further strengthened by the Holy Spirit. In our daily lives, such as school, life decisions, and another other circumstance we may encounter, we are never alone, for we have Jesus' word to guide us as well as the Holy Spirit.

3. REFLECT IT!

Our love for Jesus is reached at its fullest when we love our own brothers and sisters following His commandments. The presence of Jesus remains in all of us. Living in a world of luxury, we often become slaves to the things in life. We are responsible, as Christians, to follow all the commandments, and to follow the two greatest commandments: You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind; and You shall love your neighbor as yourself. True human interaction, compassion, and kindness are common goals and responsibilities that we can all fulfill each and every day. Even though we cannot see Jesus, His teachings, words, and love remain in each and every one of us. By truly connecting to others through kind thoughts and actions and upholding the Ten Commandments, we are one step closer to God.

4. Live It! [RESPONSIBILITY]

Responsibility: a moral obligation to behave correctly towards or in respect of; the opportunity to act independently and makes decisions without authorization; the state of face of being accountable; the state or fact of having a duty to deal with something.

We all have the free will to make our own choices. We all have the ability and wisdom to think through our actions. We also have the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are called by Jesus to follow the commandments so that can act as responsible Christians. Practice this virtue at home. When you have temptation to disobey the Ten Commandments, pray for the Holy Spirit to help give you wisdom to choose wisely and the strength to resist any temptation.

5. Remember It!

*"If you love me,
you will keep my
commandments."
(John 14:15)*

6. Pray It!

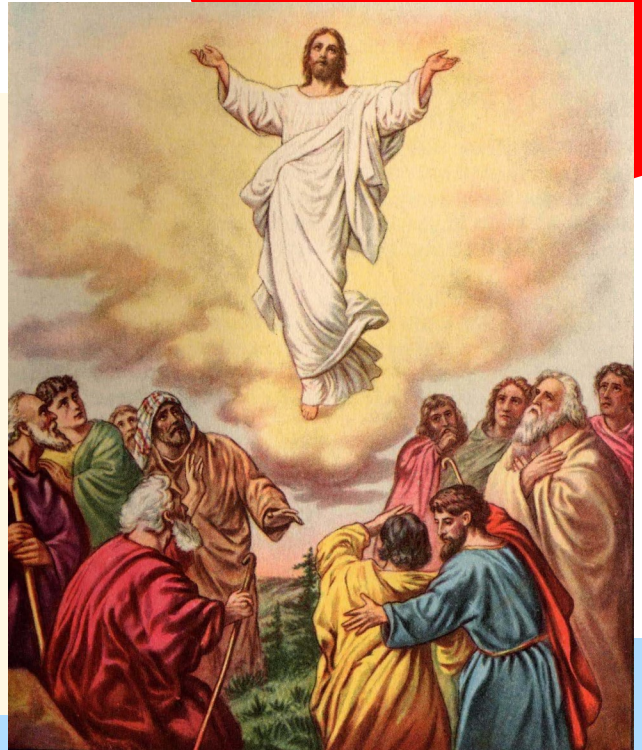
Heavenly Father, we are all humans with weaknesses and temptations. We know we are called to live each day with moral responsibilities. We know we are called to follow Jesus and His commandments. We ask that the Holy Spirit gives us guidance, wisdom, and strength to fulfill the responsibilities that we are to up hold. We pray to the Lord. Amen.

THE ASCENSION OF JESUS

WEEK A - ASCENSION OF THE LORD

MATTHEW 28:16-20

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."



1. EXPLORE IT!

In today's Gospel, Jesus commands the disciples to bring the Word of God to everyone. He calls on them to baptize all in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The eleven disciples, therefore, are the first priests of the Church, and Jesus has called them to bring more disciples of all nations. Jesus reminds the disciples that he will be with them always - just like how He is now present in the Eucharist.

2. CONNECT IT!

In society today, our faith is tested by many other influences that cause us to doubt the existence of God. We as believers must ignore what the world says. Rather, we must trust in God and have faith. We have been chosen and called by God to share His love with all those around us. Jesus is always with us.



3. REFLECT IT!

As we celebrate the Ascension of the Lord, we must remember that Jesus left us here on Earth to bring others closer to Him. We are now the hands, feet, and voices others will hear to represent God as we have been called to be His disciples.

How have you been living as an image of the Lord?



4. LIVE IT! [DISCIPLESHIP]

Discipleship - to follow Jesus by believing in Him and spreading His love and teachings. Discipleship therefore means to live with devotion as a disciple of the Lord.

- † This week, try not to gossip or speak poorly of others.
- † Be conscious of what you post on social media and how you represent yourself to your peers.
- † Do everything with love.

5. REMEMBER IT!

**"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations."
(Matthew 28:19)**



6. PRAY IT!



Lord Jesus, please help us to have the courage and faith to share Your love and words to everyone we encounter. May all those who see us, see You in our words and actions. Help us to always be faithful disciples of Yours. Amen.

JESUS' Disciples Received the Holy Spirit

WEEK A - PENTECOST SUNDAY

JOHN 20:19-23



On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."



1. Explore It!

The Holy Spirit brings many blessings and teachings to the disciples and in proxy, to ourselves; it's a reality check that we all have the unifying spirit that was poured out to the Apostles. The Holy Spirit's always with us, but it's not until the sacrament of Confirmation do we try to understand our place in the church and how we go about being stronger in spirit to be true evangelists. It's a reminder that we're always with Christ, through life and after death. The ability to communicate and speak "different tongues" also is a reminder that Christ is a unifier; the Pentecost reverses the events of the Tower of Babel, where humanity's pride caused the splitting of the human race into different cultures/communities. What once was split and divided are now unified and made whole with the Holy Spirit through the Apostles by bringing together His people through the word of God.

2. Connect It!

When you were young, did your parents or teachers give you responsibilities? Taking care of your sibling while your parents were out. Holding onto the sports equipment before recess. Or maybe given a title, rank, or role in your class, club or school? Did you feel excited or a sense of pride in expanding further than just yourself? Receiving the Holy Spirit is a little like that. The biggest difference is, our roles and responsibilities as Catholics don't start once we complete the sacrament of Confirmation, but rather it reminds and gives us an extra boost to complete our mission of spreading the word of God with love and forgiveness. We strengthen ourselves through the Holy Spirit with pride, and as confirmed members of the church, having a stronger conviction to do God's work throughout the community and the world.

3. Reflect It!

Some misunderstand what it means to receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is always with us. Our journey through Confirmation and learning further the gifts of the Holy Spirit mimic what the disciples went through with Jesus. The Holy Spirit is also known as the Advocate, a guide of sorts in our life. An empowering force that amplifies the goodness in our hearts and guides us towards doing good work for God. But understand it's not a replacement for our mind and spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn't drive us towards action, only we can do or want that. The disciples here committed their lives to following in Jesus' footsteps. And through their love, a blessing was bestowed upon them through the Holy Spirit that allowed them to further their commitment, whether it's the understanding of various languages or the spiritual determination to evangelize His word, love, and forgiveness.

5. Remember It!

*"Receive the Holy Spirit.
Whose sins you forgive
are forgiven them, and
whose sins you retain
are retained!"
(John 20:23)*

4. Live It!

[Openness]

*Giving a part of something
with another or others.*

Jesus shared an amazing blessing with the disciples, and in turned, they were able to continue to share His word, love, and forgiveness to all parts of the world, even to this day. There are many ways we can share with the world, whether its sharing our time with others, our physical belongings, or even sharing the word of God to those who seek it. Each night for a week, find a way to live the word of sharing the next day, and write a brief summary on what you did the following night!

6. Pray It!

Lord, allow us to recognize and understand the blessings You've bestowed onto us and our family, so that we may share the love, wisdom, and forgiveness to those we love, those that love us, and to all those around us. May the abundance of Your teachings inspire the greater good in our hearts to be better Apostles in Your name. Amen.

BELIEVE IN THE NAME OF JESUS

WEEK A - MOST HOLY TRINITY

JOHN 3:16-18



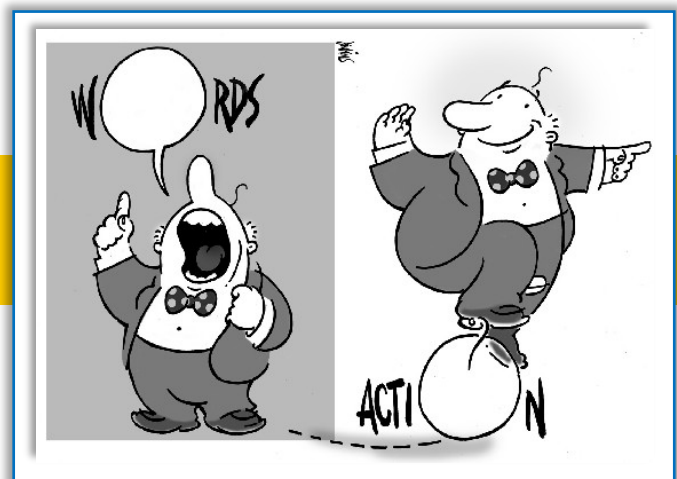
For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

1. EXPLORE IT!

God's incredible love for the world allows us eternal life through the redemption of Christ. The "world" for John is the world of men who are living in their sins and darkness. God's love for the world extends even more when He gave His one and only Son to us so that if we believe in His Son, we have eternal life. Otherwise, we are destroyed and there is no third option. When a person is baptized, he is baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and becomes a member of God's family. If this person rejects the name, they reject all their beliefs and so is already condemned.

2. CONNECT IT!

If someone comes and asks us if we love and believe in God, most of us will say yes. However, saying it is not enough to prove our belief. We have to act it out. As Pope Paul VI said in 1975, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." Be a witness of Jesus in your life so to effect change more profoundly through actions of not just spirituality but physicality as well.



3. REFLECT IT!

- † How many times do we just say we love God with our tongues but not from bottom of our hearts?
- † How many times do we just say we believe in the Holy Trinity but are scared to do the Sign of Cross in front of people in public?
- † How many times do we just say that we will change to become a witness of God but keep going to the darkness of our bad habits?

Being a Catholic isn't necessarily the willingness to be "public" about our actions, but the overcoming of shame society places on taking a stance regarding religion. If we're able to truly love God in our own way, without the stigma of shame or the consciousness of feeling out of place, we're well on our way in following His path of sharing the blessings, joy, and love of God.

5. REMEMBER IT!

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."
(John 3:16)*

4. LIVE IT! [PURPOSEFULNESS]

PURPOSEFULNESS - having an aim, goal, and meaning.

Having purpose means knowing and acting on the reason something is done or created, or the reason for its existence. It's the conscious decision making that's the key here. Are there things you do often or routinely that have a purpose, rather than something unconsciously done due to repetition? Using the Reflect It as a base, think each night about one thing we do for God purposefully. Then write a little about how you feel when you reflect on it; was it an unconscious routine that became more of a conscious decision, did society change your perspective on your actions or thoughts, what were some of the influences that started this action, thought, or belief?

6. PRAY IT!

Lord, bless me with understanding and wisdom to be more conscious of my perspectives and perceptions. Allow me to grow in courage and faith so I may believe with true purpose through acceptance, practice, and reflection to genuinely proclaim your word! Amen.



JESUS IS THE LIVING BREAD

WEEK A - Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

JOHN 6:51-58



1. EXPLORE IT!

In today's Gospel, Jesus gave us an explicit explanation of the Eucharist: it is truly His Body and His Blood. He also told us the effects of eating His Body and drinking His Blood: life, eternal life, will be raised on the last day, remain in Jesus and Jesus remains in us, and to live with Him forever. He is the Living Bread that came down from heaven—those who eat of this Bread will live forever. Here in this Gospel passage Jesus is speaking in the physical-literal sense, not symbolically, which in result many people have abandoned Him after hearing this. Note to see that Jesus seems to sense that the crowd was agitated by His statement "I am the living bread

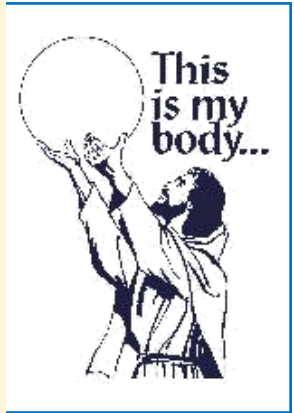
which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh," so he even repeated it a second time with even more literal emphasis "Unless you eat the flesh... and drink His blood..." Jesus made no attempt to soften his previous statement nor "correct" anything, because there wasn't any "misunderstandings." Saint Paul confirms this in his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" When we receive the Eucharist, we participate in the

I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever."

true flesh and blood of Christ, not just in any "symbols." Theodore of Mopsuestia from the 5th century summarized this quite well "When Christ gave the bread He did not say, 'This is the symbol of my Body,' but, 'This is my Body.' In the same way, when He gave the cup of His Blood he did not say, 'This is the symbol of my Blood,' but, 'This is my Blood,' for He wanted us to look upon the Eucharistic elements, after their reception of grace and the coming of the Holy Spirit, not according to their nature, but to receive them as they are, the body and blood of our Lord" (Catechetical Homilies 5:1).

2. CONNECT IT!

We often times receive the Eucharist during Mass, but how often do we receive it with a sincere heart, firm belief and realization of the act we are doing? Do we believe that at the moment of consecration, transubstantiation happens: the bread and the wine becomes the Body and Blood of Christ. The physical appearance of bread and wine, or in Aristotelian term “accidental” remains the same, however, the nature of its character, its “substance” is transformed into Christ Himself. When we come up to receive it, the priest or Eucharistic minister says “The Body of Christ. The Blood of Christ.” to which we respond “Amen” which means “I believe.” Do we truly believe what we are professing, or has it become a habit that loses its meaning for us individually?



3. REFLECT IT!

The Eucharist is the Doorway to Heaven. In the Eucharist, Jesus Christ becomes “life-giving.” Jesus also invites us to be the “Eucharist” to the world, to show them His love. To be “Eucharist” to the world means to be “life-giving.” One question one can reflect on is “Have I been life giving? Or have I been self-centred and kept all the blessings to myself without sharing it and be life giving for others?” We receive the Eucharist, but do we live the Eucharist in our daily lives or not, when others are not watching? The Eucharist in on the altar-do we embody ourselves to be more like Jesus when we receive Him and bring Him out on to the streets, to be Eucharist for others?

4. LIVE IT!

[**THANKFULNESS**] — *Feeling or expressing gratitude; appreciative.*

For this week, to practice the virtue of thankfulness:

1. Take 5 minutes every night to reflect on the things we are thankful for.
2. Write them down, for example, “I’m thankful for _____, _____, _____.”

3. Then give thanks to God for what you have received.

5. REMEMBER IT!

**“Whoever
eats my flesh
and drinks
my blood has
eternal life.”**

(John 6:54)

6. PRAY IT!

My Jesus, I love You with my whole heart. I am sorry for having offended You. I promise, with the help of Your grace, never more to offend You; and, at this moment, miserable as I am, I consecrate my whole being to You. I give You my entire will, all my affections and desires and all that I have. From this day forward, do what You will with me and with everything that belongs to me. I ask and desire only Your holy love, the gift of final perseverance and the perfect fulfillment of Your will. Amen.

WEEK A - 010
MATTHEW
9:9-13

WITH HOPE, MATTHEW FOLLOW JESUS

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with Jesus and his disciples. The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" He heard this and said, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."



1. EXPLORE IT!

Jesus recruits a new follower, Matthew, and shares a meal with him. Upon seeing Jesus and His disciples dine with the outcasts of society, tax collectors and sinners, the religious leaders question His actions, wondering why Jesus spends time with sinners instead of more important people. Jesus responds to them by saying that He came to heal the sick, not the healthy.

2. CONNECT IT!

Who needs a doctor? Not the healthy, right? People who need to see the doctor are those who are sick, injured, or in pain. Jesus teaches us that this applies to faith as well. Doctors are not going to help those who are already healthy, but rather treat the ill. When we are spreading the Word of God, we are not only sharing it to those who already know it, but rather, we spread God's love to those who are in need of healing, to those in need of God.

3. REFLECT IT!

Think about who you spend your time with. Are there opportunities in our lives where we can imitate Christ? For example, who do you spend your time with at lunch? Is there a fellow student that can use a friend?

At family gatherings, do you ever try reaching out to the relative who is off in the corner by themselves? We have many opportunities to be like Jesus, and this Gospel is about reaching out to those who need us.

4. LIVE IT! [HOPE]

Hope is the feeling of placing our trust in God when we desire something good.

It takes strength and courage to reach out to those shunned by society. In placing our trust in Jesus, have hope that when you extend yourself to outsiders that you will be accepted. This week, talk to someone you normally wouldn't talk to. Bring joy by learning about them and see what you have in common.



6. PRAY IT!

Dear Heavenly Father,
Please grant us the eyes to recognize who is truly in need around us. We pray for the strength to be able to step out of our comfort zone and reach out to those less fortunate, that we may stand up to any criticism that may come along with such action. Help us to bring love and hope to these people. Amen.

5. REMEMBER IT!

**HE SAID TO HIM,
"FOLLOW ME."
AND HE GOT UP AND
FOLLOWED HIM.**

(MATTHEW 9:9)

The Compassion of JESUS

At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."

Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus, "Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, make this proclamation: 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give.



1. Explore It!

In this week's Gospel, Jesus is moved with compassion as He looks upon the people gathered before Him wanting guidance. Knowing that He will need the help of others to shepherd the people, He sent 12 of His disciples with instructions to go to the lost people of Israel to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, perform miracles of curing the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and drive out demons in the name of God.

2. Connect It!

The movie series "Mission Impossible," starring Tom Cruise, depicts a super agent whose mission is to somehow save the world, all on his own, if not but the help of just a small team. Like the agent, Jesus also has the almost-impossible mission to save the whole world. But instead of doing it with just a small team, He enlists the help of His disciples, giving them the same super-agent skills Jesus has - to cure the sick, drive out demons, etc. Today, Jesus gives that same mission to the whole Catholic Church through the Pope, Bishops, and priests. Jesus sees the need to show compassion to the whole world, and He enlists the help of those trusted around Him to be His hands, feet, and mouth.

3. Reflect It!

Have you encountered Christ? Or rather, have you encountered Christ through a friend, a teacher, a priest, or even a stranger? We might not physically be next to Christ each day in our lives, but we can definitely encounter Christ through the love and compassion of others through simple things like a smile when we're down or helping hand when we're in need. When was the last time you felt Jesus' love through the compassion and care of another person?

4. Live It! → [sharing]

Sharing — giving a portion of (something) to another or others

It is often quoted, "Sharing is caring." Sharing not only means to give a portion of something to another or others, but to do so with love and compassion. Jesus shared His authority to His disciples for the love of the people following Him. There are many ways that you, too, can share in Jesus' mission. This week, share Jesus' love by visiting someone who is sick or lonely, or maybe pray for a deceased relative.

5. REMEMBER IT!

**"WITHOUT COST YOU HAVE RECEIVED;
WITHOUT COST YOU ARE TO GIVE
(MATTHEW 10:8)**

6. Pray It!

Dear Jesus, thank you for sending us Your guidance through our priest, clergies, youth-leaders, and parents. May we heed Your words and mission from them and become Your servants to guide others who are lost themselves. Amen.

Acknowledge Jesus

Jesus said to the Twelve: "Fear no one. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father."

1 Explore It!

In this week's Gospel, Jesus speaks about acknowledging His presence in our life. He tells the people that God is ever so present in our lives that he knows the exact number of hairs on our head. Jesus calls His listeners to not only acknowledge Him in private but also to acknowledge Him in front of others as well.



2 Connect It!

Sometimes, we are embarrassed about certain aspects of our life. Maybe we're embarrassed about liking a certain type of music, shows, or even our faith and beliefs. Because we're embarrassed, we tend to hide our passions and our faith. We are afraid to make obvious that we believe in Jesus Christ to others outside of those at our church. For example, sometimes we might feel embarrassed to do the Sign of the Cross at lunch when we're at school. However, we must do our best to own our passions and especially our faith and be proud of who we are.

3 Reflect It!

When was the last time you proudly proclaimed, "I am a Catholic"? When was the last time you felt joy and pride in being a part of Christ's Church? Sometimes, we shy away from doing and feeling those things because we're afraid of being judged by our peers. However, as Jesus tells us in the Gospel, we need to acknowledge Him not just to ourselves but to others as well. If we expect Jesus to acknowledge us and take us in, we need to be able to do the same.

4 Live It! [Courage]

Courage - Mental or moral strength to persevere and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty.

Courage allows one to be able to not only face difficulty and fear but also to overcome it. It takes courage to stand firm and be proud of our faith in today's society. We fear being judged or being laughed at by our peers. However, if you stay rooted in your faith in God, you will realize that the only thing that matter is Him. This week, don't shy away from acknowledging Jesus. You can do the Sign of the Cross at lunch, or even inviting your friends to attend Mass with you. Let everyone around you know you're a believer of Jesus Christ.

5 Remember It!

**"But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father."
(Matthew 10:33)**

6 Pray It!

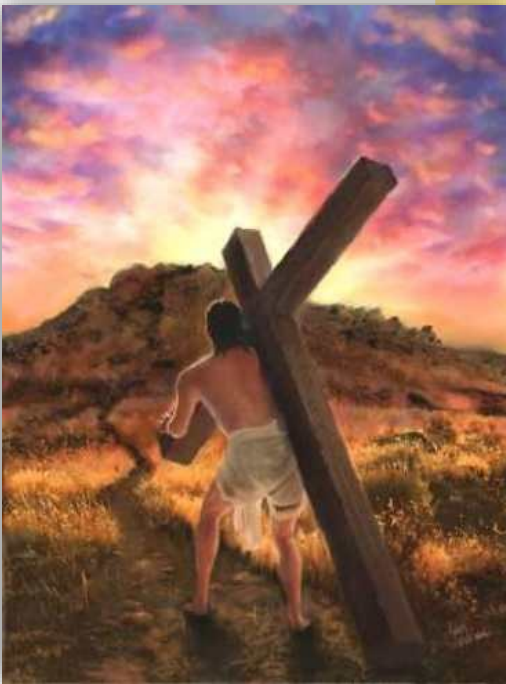
Lord, this week, please give us the courage to acknowledge You in our lives, both in private as well as in public. Please help us realize that You matter above all else so that we can make You the center of our lives. Amen.

CONDITIONS AND REWARDS FOR JESUS DISCIPLES

Jesus said to his apostles: "whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

"Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is righteous will receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because he is a disciple—amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward."

I. EXPLORE IT!



Jesus states to His disciples that whoever loves a family member more than they love Jesus is not worthy of Him. Likewise, whoever does not take up their own cross to follow Jesus is not worthy of Him. Jesus declares that anyone who finds his own life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Jesus will find it.

Any person who receives a disciple of Jesus receives Jesus also, and the one who sent Jesus; and in turn, they will receive a fitting reward.

2. Connect It!

The Catholic lifestyle is not only a life founded on love and mercy, but above all, it is founded on Jesus Himself. In today's Gospel, Jesus claims a special place in our lives, more important than our deepest loved ones. Being a disciple is not a marginal aspect of our lives, but rather, the central part of our lives. As Jesus so wholeheartedly loves His father and us, He asks us to love Him in the same way, such that we would dedicate our life to serving Him as He gave His life for us.

3. Reflect It!

In today's Gospel, Jesus calls us to leave behind our jobs, our friends, our family, and basically our entire lives to follow and serve Him. Does this mean we can't have jobs? Does this mean we actually have to give up hanging out with our family and friends? No! We just have to find ways to incorporate our lives into our growing relationship with Christ, while keeping Christ as the center of our lives. What things distract you from Christ? How can you make adjustments to make Christ the center of your life from today onward?

4. Live It! [DETACHMENT]

Detachment - to be able to experience feelings without allowing those feelings to control you or your decisions. This allows us to make good choices based on both our thoughts and feelings rather than just our reactions.

Jesus calls us to dedicate our lives to serving Him as His disciples. The detachment He calls for in this Gospel allows us to separate what things in our lives bring us away from Him and what things bring us closer to Him. By detaching ourselves from these distractions, we can more readily focus ourselves on Christ and make Him the center of our life. This week, set aside a time that you typically use for socializing or social media and dedicate that time to Christ instead. Whether you spend that time praying, reading the Gospel, or listening to religious songs, use that time to become closer to Christ.

5. Remember It!

*"Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."
(Matthew 10:39)*

6. Pray It!

Dear Jesus, we ask You to open our eyes to the distractions in our life that may bring us further away from You. Please grant us the strength to put You first and to serve You with our entire lives by taking up the cross and following You. Amen.

THE GENTLE MASTERY OF JESUS

WEEK A - 014
MATTHEW 11:25-30

At that time Jesus said in reply, "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."



1.

EXPLORE IT!

Jesus begins today's Gospel with praise to God the Father, who has handed over all things to the Son to grant the joys of the Father's revelations to those open to receive it. Jesus continues on as He invites those who are weary and burdened to come to Him, and He would grant those willing to follow Him rest.

2.

CONNECT IT!

Feeling stressed? From grades, homework, school, friends, relationships, siblings, parents, we all feel stress at some point in our lives some of us on a daily basis! Tired? Sleepy? Too much going on in your life? Heavyweights pulling your shoulders down? Sound familiar? Jesus understands. Overwhelmed? Uncertain? Unhappy? Sad? Depressed? He is calling out to you!

Jesus is telling you to come to Him, and you will find comfort in Him! You will find peace, joy, and rest! The notions of needing to Overachieve, or to be perfect in order to have a "successful future" is put into perspective by Jesus. He is calling us to simply be obedient to His words and teachings, to be kind to one another, and to live a simple life of humility. In doing so, we too may find more comfort in all things.

3. REFLECT IT!

When was the last time you took a break for yourself to actually reflect back on your own life? What are the basic things important to your life? Think of one or two small things you can do to keep life a little simpler and a lot more stress-free. Use prayer to find peace and tranquility in your worries and problems.

4.

LIVE IT! [GENTLENESS]

Gentleness is to be kind and soft in your thoughts, words, and touch towards someone or something. Imagine picking up a sleeping newborn baby - you need to be peaceful, have self-control, have patience, and most importantly have a loving touch. This week, be gentle to your friends and neighbors if you come upon a situation when disagreement may arise. Discuss things rationally, peacefully, and lovingly to come up with an appropriate solution.



5. REMEMBER IT!

**“TAKE MY YOKE UPON
YOU AND LEARN
FROM ME, FOR I AM
MEEK AND HUMBLE
OF HEART.”
(MATTHEW 11:29)**

6.

PRAY IT!

Lord Jesus, there are days where I feel overwhelmed and tired. There are days when I feel I have no one to lean on, no one to talk to. Remind me that You are ever present in my life - that I may turn to You always with my struggles and challenges, that my heart may always rest in You, who gives me peace. Amen.

JESUS' PARABLE OF THE SOWER

On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

The disciples approached him and said, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He said to them in reply, "Because knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted. To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because 'they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand.' Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says: *'You shall indeed hear but not understand, you shall indeed look but never see. Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and be converted, and I heal them.'*



"But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. Amen, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it. "Hear then the parable of the sower. The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart. The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit. But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold."

I. EXPLORE IT!

As the people gathered to hear Jesus, He began teaching by telling a story likening the Word of God to sowing seed. At times, a seed may fall to the side of the path, only to be eaten up by birds. Other times, the seed may fall on rocky ground, unable to plant strong roots and be dried up against the hot sun. And then there was the seed that grew amongst the thorns, only to be suffocated by the opposing plant. But finally, Jesus added, was the seed that fell on rich soil, which grew and became fruitful. Jesus reveals to His disciples how stories like these help the people understand the kingdom of heaven.

2. CONNECT IT!

All seeds contain a tiny plant inside waiting for just the right conditions to germinate and grow! What conditions are these? Seeds require sufficient sunlight once they sprout to produce energy through photosynthesis. Seeds require the right temperature - whether spring or fall to activate. Seeds require good soil, where it will draw nutrients and ground itself with roots. Seeds require protection from bugs, birds, animals, and even other plants in order to survive. And seeds finally require sufficient water, enough to keep the soil moist but not to drown the plant itself. Only under the right conditions will a seed begin to sprout, thrive, and grow to become a tree, a plant, a flower.

The same goes for our faith! For a seed, the sun is a source of light to give energy, but as Catholics, we look towards Jesus the Son, who is our source of life. Like a plant, we need strong roots planted firmly in our faith so we do not get uprooted when the floods come or the winds blow. Just as water and soil provide nutrition to enrich a budding plant, the Eucharist nourishes our bodies and souls. Sometimes the obstacles and struggles in our lives might make it take longer to produce fruit, but just like any seed, the potential is always there!

4. LIVE IT! [ENTHUSIASM]

ENTHUSIASM— the virtue of doing something wholeheartedly and eagerly with a positive attitude

Jesus said we cannot live on bread alone but by the word of God. As a young Catholic, do you desire the Word of God with enthusiasm? For this week, open up your heart and then open up the bible to next week's Gospel reading and take a few minutes to read and contemplate on God's message to you.

3. REFLECT IT!

Like the seeds sown that fell on the path picked away by the birds, or the seeds that fell into the rocky ground and unable to develop strong roots, our faith can disappear easily if not firmly rooted in the Word of God. What are some of the challenges that may prevent the Word of God from planting deep roots into your life? How can you enrich your life to allow God's seed to be sown firmly and become fruitful?

5. REMEMBER IT!

"But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it."

(Matthew 13:23)

6. PRAY IT!

Lord Jesus, help me to do more than just looking for You, but rather, to truly see You present in my life. Help me to do more than just hear You, but rather, to truly listen to Your word. Help me to understand You more with my whole heart so that You may be with me always. Amen.

JESUS'

PARABLE OF THE WEEDS

WEEK A-O16

MATTHEW
13:24-43

Jesus proposed another parable to them. “The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off. When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. The slaves of the householder came to him and said, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in



your field? Where have the weeds come from?’ He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ His slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ He replied, ‘No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, “First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.”’

He proposed another parable to them. “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is

the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the ‘birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.’”

He spoke to them another parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened.”

All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables. He spoke to them only in parables, to fulfill what had been said through the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables, I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation of the world.”

Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house. His disciples approached him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” He said in reply, “He who sows good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. Just as weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears ought to hear.

I .EXPLORE IT!

Jesus continues in today's Gospel with His ministry of describing the kingdom of heaven to the people. He begins with a parable of a sower who had an enemy that planted weeds that grew amongst the seeds of wheat; however instead of pulling out the weeds right away for fear of uprooting the good wheat, the sower had the servants wait until the harvest, where the servants would then separate the good wheat from the weeds. Another illustration Jesus describes heaven to the people is that of a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds but

when fully grown, is the largest of all trees. The disciples ask Jesus to explain to them the parables. Jesus explains to them that the sower is the Son of Man sowing good seed, which are the children of heaven, throughout the field, which is the whole world. But the devil will plant its own children, the weeds, into that same field. The harvest is the end of the world, when the angels will collect all the weeds to be burned in fire and the good wheat stored away in the kingdom of heaven.

2. CONNECT IT!

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a beautiful garden of flowers that blooms in the spring. The gardener has planted all the beautiful flowers in his garden and is waiting for all the flowers to blossom and bloom. As the flowers grow, so do the weeds. Weeds are undesirable, unattractive, or even troublesome but the gardener did not want to pull out his beautiful flowers along with the weeds, as they look very similar and he knows that the roots of his flowers have not yet taken hold of the ground. So, the gardener patiently waited and allowed for the flowers to grow amongst the weed and blossom. Once blossomed, the gardener and his helpers were able to differentiate between the flowers and the weeds, and was able to remove the weeds. When spring came, the flowers bloomed beautifully and the gardener was very content. Similarly, despite all the challenges that surrounds us, God has given all of us the opportunity to grow and develop strong roots.

3. REFLECT IT!

The Lord is fair and merciful. He invites each and every one of us to live and be children of heaven. As we live the Word of God, our faith grows stronger and we become more like God. He encourages all of us to live a life of prayer and of righteousness, without sin or evil-doing. Like the Lord, the master in this passage allowed for both the wheat and weeds to grow, however, when time comes for harvest, the wheat and the weeds are separated and the weeds were bundled up and burned. How are you living the Word of God in your daily life?

4. LIVE IT! [FAIRNESS]

Fairness: the quality of being impartial and just, in treatment and behavior, without favoritism and discrimination.

To be impartial and just can sometimes be a challenge, especially in this day and age. Jesus asks us to leave behind all our ill-judgments of others, favoritism, and discrimination to follow Him so that we can become a better version of ourselves. As He is fair to us, we should be to one another. What decisions did you make this week that have required you to be impartial? This week, before you have to make challenging decisions, pray to God and ask Him for guidance so that you can make the best decisions possible.

5. REMEMBER IT!

**"First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn."
(Matthew 13:30)**

6. PRAY IT!

Dear Lord, please guide us on the path that leads to You. Allow us to live Your word each and every day of our lives so that we can become more like You and worthy to be children of heaven. Amen.

JESUS' Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven

MATTHEW 13:44-52

Jesus said to his disciples: "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

"Do you understand all these things?" They answered, "Yes." And he replied, "Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old."

1. EXPLORE IT!

In today's Gospel, Jesus describes to His followers how precious the Kingdom of God is. Jesus likens heaven as a treasure, or even a pearl of such great value that a person would be willing to sell all they own to obtain it. He then describes heaven as a net full of all fish from the sea, but then gets sorted once the boat reaches shore: the good fish is sorted from the bad fish. In the same way, Jesus describes how the angels will sort the wicked from the righteous, and the wicked will be thrown into the fires of hell.



2. CONNECT IT!

The Kingdom of Heaven is like bubble tea, with all its sweetness and mix of flavorful tea, milk, and tapioca pearls, one cannot help but consume such a rich drink with an extra wide straw! Again, the kingdom of heaven is like waiting for the last day of school before summer; as you count down the final days of class and watch the clock tick away until the bell finally rings, you can finally rejoice as the moment of sun, beaches, games, and sleeping in late has arrived.

4. LIVE IT! [WISDOM]

Wisdom - the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgement in decision and action.

Often, making the right decision and doing the right thing can be challenging, however, by praying to God and asking for guidance and wisdom, He can help you discern the good from the bad, and right from wrong. This week, when you feel you have to make a difficult decision and cannot come up with a resolution, pray to God and the Holy spirit for guidance and wisdom. You can also seek wisdom and guidance from others around you.

3. REFLECT IT!

Trying to define or even understand something as perplex as heaven is not an easy task, yet Jesus used common everyday tasks and objects to describe heaven to the everyday People of His time - the kingdom of heaven, in all its glory, could actually be described as something small and seemingly insignificant. Today, God is inviting you to enter into His kingdom. What is the kingdom of heaven like for you? How would You describe the kingdom of heaven in your teenage life?

5. REMEMBER IT!

*“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”
(Matthew 13:44)*

6. PRAY IT!

Dear Lord, please graciously grant me with wisdom to choose and to do what is right and good for myself, others, and Your glory. Amen.

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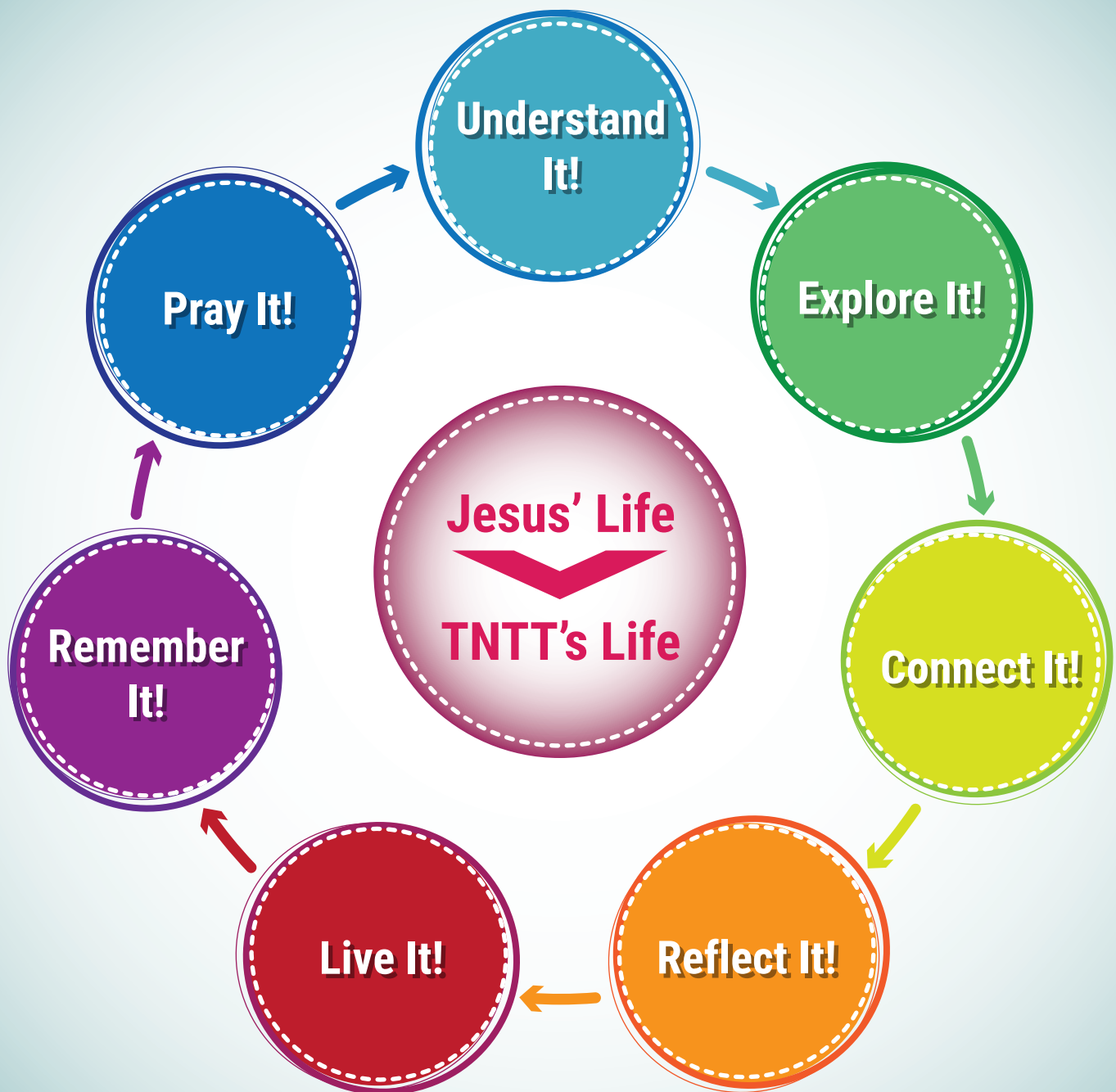
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WEEKLY SCRIPTURE LESSON MOTTO

Imitate Jesus' life through Scripture by learning, practicing, and living the Catholic virtues



*“Go and Make
Disciples
of All Nations”*

Mt 28:19

