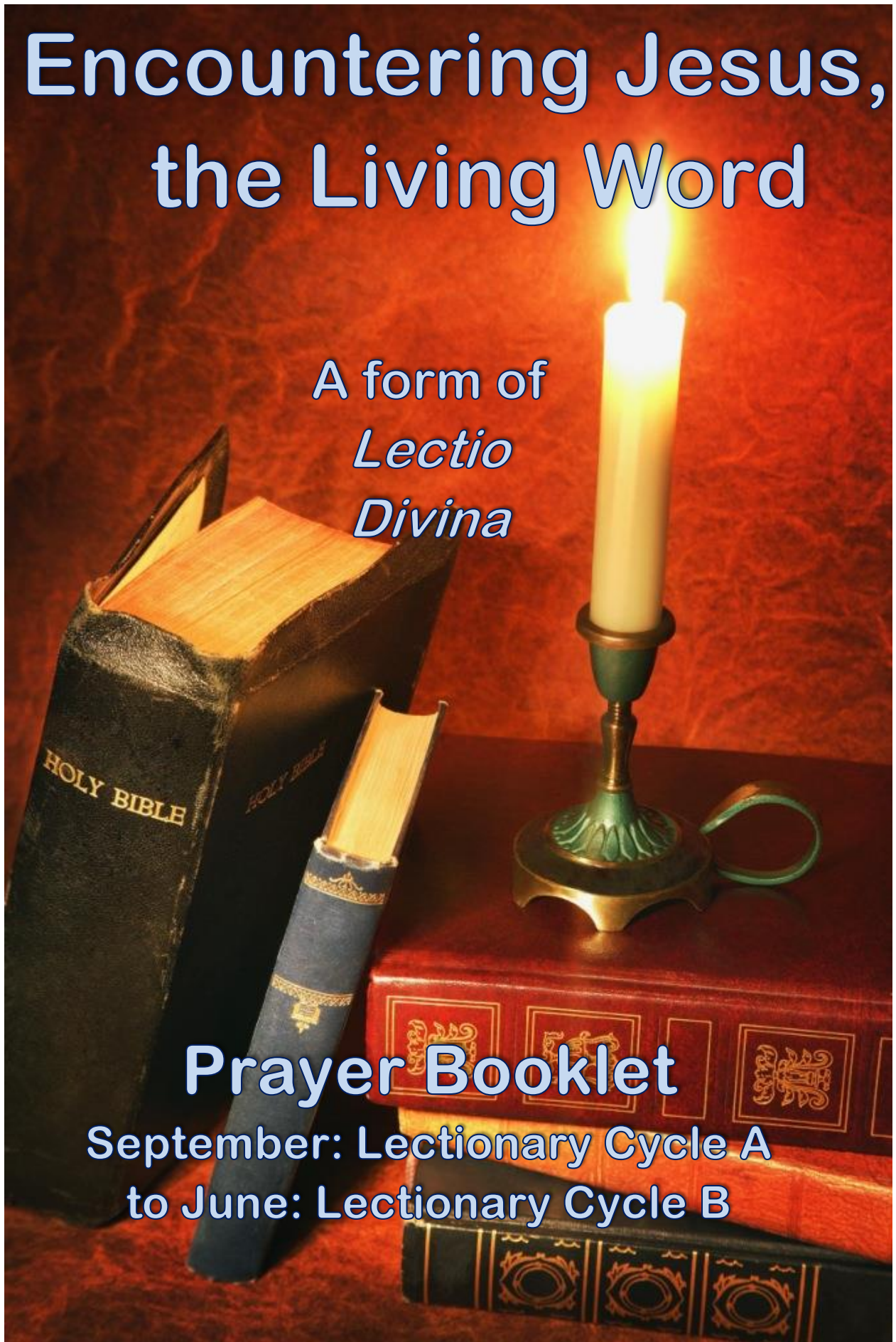


Encountering Jesus, the Living Word

A form of
*Lectio
Divina*

Prayer Booklet

September: Lectionary Cycle A
to June: Lectionary Cycle B



Under the direction of the Most Rev. Richard Smith, Archbishop of Edmonton, this prayer resource has been prepared by a committee of religious education consultants and archdiocesan staff for use in the Archdiocese of Edmonton.

Committee members:

Susan Barylo, Archdiocesan Catechesis Office
Kathleen Nguyen, Archdiocesan Sacramental Education Initiative

LeeAnn Arsenault, Red Deer Catholic Schools
Suzanne Foisy-Moquin, Conseil Scolaire Centre-Nord
Louis Kloster, Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools
Karen Koester, Evergreen Catholic Schools
Ryan Ledene, Red Deer Catholic Schools
Wanda Lehman, St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Schools
Patti Liogier, Edmonton Catholic Schools
Bridget McAndrews, Living Waters Catholic Schools
Alene Mutala, Elk Island Catholic Schools
Richard Reis, East Central Alberta Catholic Schools
Janice Stefancik, Edmonton Catholic Schools
Sandra Talarico, Edmonton Catholic Schools

Why is Scripture important?

The best-selling book in history, the Bible (Scripture) is actually a library of books containing many types of writing: historical, prophetic, and poetic. The library must be read and interpreted in light of the entire library, not just bits and pieces. We see in Scripture the “ineffable loving-kindness of God and see for ourselves the thought and care he has given to accommodating his language to our nature.”¹

In Scripture, God speaks to us. In Scripture, God reveals to us everything that we need to know about him.

“God graciously arranged that what he had once revealed for the salvation of all peoples should last forever in its entirety and be transmitted to all generations.”²

The fullness of this revelation is a Person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Before leaving the apostles, Jesus told them to carry on his mission:

“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, and **teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you**. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

~ Mt. 28:19-20

The apostles carried out this mission with their words, their witness, and their lives. They passed this mission and their own authority to teach to their successors: bishops. Thus sacred tradition and sacred scripture act as a mirror in which we, the Church, contemplate God until the day we meet God face to face.³ Bishops through the centuries have exhorted the faithful to “maintain the traditions which they had learned either by word of mouth or by letter.”⁴ *Lectio divina* is one of those traditions.

It is important—as disciples of Christ—to listen quietly and prayerfully to God’s word and to form our lives on it. *Lectio divina* (Latin for ‘divine reading’) is a way of using Scripture to contact the living God. This practice began more than a thousand years ago in monastic communities. Because this practice is so fruitful, the Church still recommends it today.

¹ *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)*, Second Vatican Council, November 18, 1965; 13

² *Ibid*, 7

³ *Ibid*, 7

⁴ *Ibid*, 8.

What is Lectio Divina?

Lectio Divina (or divine reading) is a very ancient practice. It is “capable of opening up to the faithful the treasures of God’s word, but also of bringing about an encounter with Christ, the living word of God.”⁵ Lectio divina is a contemplative way of reading and praying with Scripture. The basic steps are shown below.

Step 1: reading and listening

Start with reading (**lectio**) the text. If you are not reading it but hearing someone else read it, listen deeply. Try to imitate the prophet Elijah by listening for the voice of God in the silence of your heart (1 Kings 19:12). What do you hear God’s voice saying to you? How do you feel God touching your heart? Read and listen with an open heart. God will speak personally and intimately to each person gathered here. So in this step, we read slowly, and listen attentively, to hear the word or phrase that is God’s word for us this day.



Step 2: meditating, pondering, ruminating

Once we have heard a word or a passage in the Scriptures which speaks to us in a personal way, we must take it in and ponder it. Meditate (**meditatio**), ruminate or chew on it. The image of cattle and sheep quietly chewing their cud is an ancient symbol of God’s chosen people pondering the Word of God. Take in the word; memorize it; repeat it; allow it to interact with your thoughts, your hopes, your memories, your desires. By meditating on it, we allow God’s word to move and challenge us at our deepest levels.

Step 3: praying

Through prayer, we allow that word to transform us. Prayer (**oratio**) in this step is multi-faceted. It is dialogue with God—a conversation with the One who has invited us into loving relationship. It is our response to what we heard God say to us in today’s Scripture passage. Prayer is also an offering of parts of ourselves and our lives that we now know God wants us to offer. When we offer those forgotten parts of ourselves to God, we are praying to consecrate them to God’s purposes. In prayer, we allow the word we are pondering to touch and change our deepest selves.

Step 4: contemplating

Finally, lectio divina concludes with contemplation (**contemplatio**). “We take up, as a gift from God, his own way of seeing and judging reality.”⁶ We rest in the presence of the One who has invited us to accept His transforming embrace. There are moments in loving relationships when words are unnecessary. This is true in our relationship with God. Wordless, quiet rest in the presence of God is called *contemplation*. Again we sit in silence, letting go of our own words, and simply enjoy being in the presence of God.

⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 87

⁶ Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, *Five Stages of Sacred Reading*, a handout from ScriptureFest 2011. The graphic on this page is also from his handout.

You are invited to engage in a process through which we encounter Jesus Christ, the Living Word, in the Scriptures.

Guidelines for this process

1. We share our stories with one another. We share the story of the Christian faith and the Catholic tradition, and we connect that greater story to our own smaller stories. We encounter and live our faith in community with one another. We connect through telling our stories, but everyone shares to the extent they are comfortable. Keep in mind that we learn from each other, and people will learn from your contributions.
2. We balance our own need to talk with respectful listening to one another. Each person needs time to “get their voice into the room.” Also people deserve our courtesy, even if we disagree. Any message can be conveyed with courtesy for the other.
3. We respect and keep one another’s confidence. Sometimes, participants in this encounter will share at a personal or deeper level. These situations should remain within the group as they will have been shared in confidence. This is part of building an environment of trust and respect.
4. We listen and we learn. We offer our own experience, strength, and hope to others, discovering new ways to approach our lives by hearing how others have lived a life of faith. We talk about the problems we ourselves have encountered and how we have used our faith experience, our relationship with Jesus Christ, and our knowledge of God to help work through them.
5. Challenge yourself. People also have something to learn from you. We listen openly, share respectfully, and we refrain from judging, criticizing, and offering unsolicited advice.

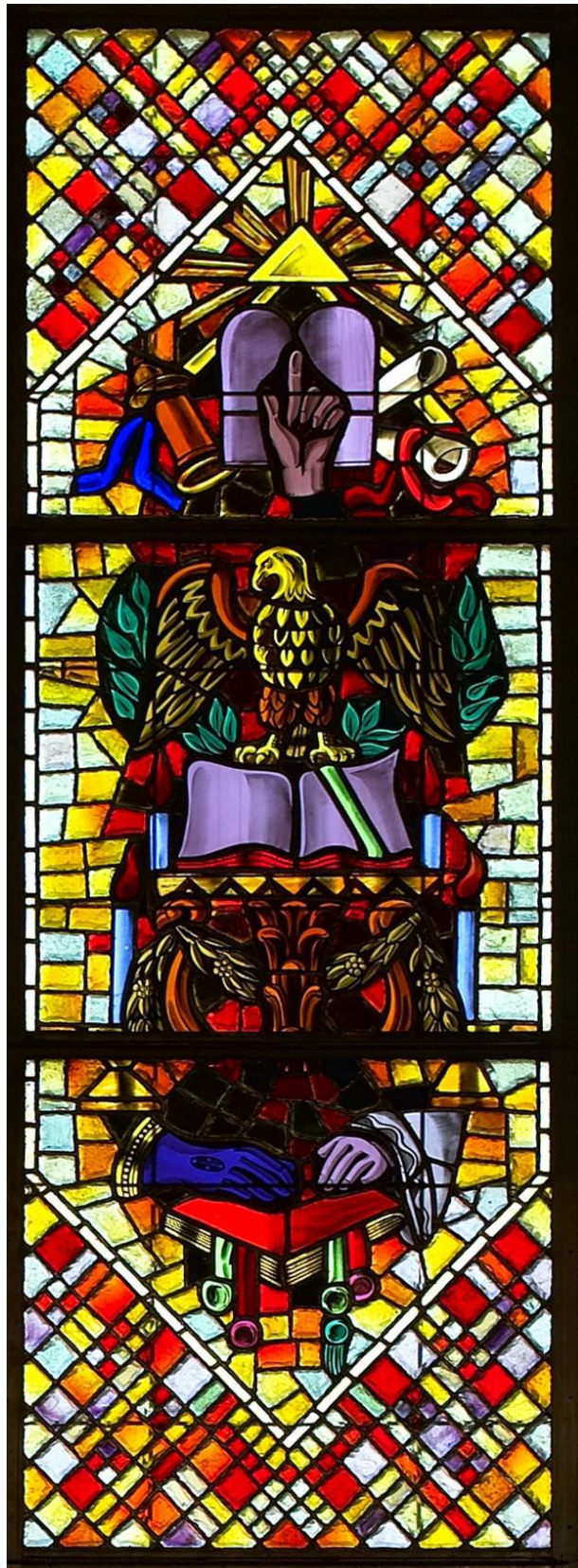
Prayer before reading Scripture:

+

Father, open our hearts,
for you are present among us now and always.
Let your Holy Spirit speak to us as we read your Word.
Lead us toward an encounter with you as we delve into the Scriptures.
Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of those gathered here,
and enkindle in us the fire of your love.
Father, send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

We ask all this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Saviour.

Amen. +



1 "The Ministry of Lector Window" at St. Joseph Seminary, Edmonton

Tips for small group facilitators:

- Have a printed Bible available for everyone: the New Revised Standard Version – Catholic Edition (or NRSV-CE). One of the learning outcomes of this experience is to have everyone become comfortable with finding Scripture passages in the Bible.
- If you also use a Smartboard, link to www.BibleGateway.com and select the *New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition*.
- Your responsibilities as facilitator each month:
 1. To read the Scripture passage, and the two pages in this guide for the month, ahead of time.
 2. To lead the opening prayer (provided on page 5).
 3. To keep an eye on the time.
 4. To encourage people to share their insights by sharing your own.
 5. To keep the session focussed.

September

Parables of the Lost

1. Begin with the prayer on page 5.
2. Share the following background information with your group:
 - a. Jesus used parables to reveal or convey powerful, often hidden, messages or truths about the exact nature of God and God's relationship to humanity.
 - b. Today's Gospel recounts the parable of the workers in the vineyard.
 - c. This parable is bracketed by sayings about the first and the last. In the verse before this Gospel begins, Jesus has just said, "But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first." You will notice that he ends this parable the same way.
 - d. This parable is unique to Matthew; it is not found in the other three Gospels.
 - e. You will hear this Gospel at Mass on the Twenty-fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time.
 - f. As we read this Gospel, make a mental note of any word, phrase, or image that captures your attention.
3. Ask one person to volunteer to read the Gospel out loud, *slowly*: **Matthew 20:1-16**
4. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
5. Ask the group **one** of these questions:
 - ◆ "Is there a word, phrase, or image that touches your heart today? Feel free to share."
 - ◆ "Is there a person in the passage with whom you identify today? Feel free to share."
 - ◆ "Does anything in the passage unsettle or challenge you today? Feel free to share."

(During this time, please do not offer any comment or judgment on what people choose to share.)

6. After the group has shared their initial thoughts and insights, provide them with the following information: (Use only as needed. These are provided for facilitating discussion in your group and do not have to be used in their entirety. Use what you are comfortable with to stimulate discussion.)
 - a. According to Jewish law, laborers were to be paid on the same day as they had worked, before sundown. (See Leviticus 19:13)
 - b. The landowner promises the first workers the usual daily wage. Scholars generally say that the 'usual daily wage' (20:2) was one denarius... the amount paid to a common labourer or ordinary Roman soldier.
 - c. The landowner went out several more times in the day to get workers, and to each he proposed "whatever is right" (20:4). Each set agreed to work for what was promised.
 - d. This parable was a deliberate challenge to the conventional views of *just reward*. In Jesus' time, as in ours, people's expectations regarding just pay were that those who worked more should be paid more.
 - e. The landowner was just: he paid a day's wage to those who worked the full day. His generosity to those who worked shorter days is what causes the workers to grumble against him.

7. Read the Gospel aloud a second time, *slowly*.
8. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
9. Invite any other sharing, and allow the dialogue to move and develop. (Again, facilitators are encouraged to refrain from passing judgment or comment)
10. Help to draw out the following understandings during your discussion: (use as needed)
 - a. In this parable, the vineyard owner represents God who is extraordinarily generous with us. God blesses and gifts us in countless ways. We cannot do anything that merits God's love; we cannot earn God's generosity or graciousness.
 - b. The story is about people getting what they deserve... enough food each day to feed one's family come sundown. We *all* deserve our 'daily bread.'
 - c. It appears that God wants to give lavishly to those most in need in our world. As Christians, Catholic social teaching mandates that Christians maintain a preferential option for the poor.
 - d. God loves each of us equally. There is nothing we can do—good or bad—to change God's love for us.
 - e. God's generosity with blessing those we feel do not deserve it is where our jealousy and envy arise. Envy is one of the seven deadly sins. Envy can be a destructive force within a community.
 - f. When we focus on what we consider to be the 'unfairness' of paying every vineyard worker (us) in this parable the same daily wage, regardless of the hours worked, we fail to see the goodness and generosity of the landowner (God).
 - g. Reward in God's kingdom is not based on how long a person has been Christ's disciple. Citizens of God's kingdom receive an abundance of blessings reckoned by grace, not by timecards.
11. Conclude with a vocal prayer such as the *Our Father* or *Hail, Mary*.

October

The Greatest Commandment

1. Begin with the prayer on page 5.
2. Share the following background information with your group:
 - a. In the Gospel from the Sunday before this Gospel is proclaimed, Matthew made clear that two opposing political groups have united to trap Jesus.
 - b. In this particular Gospel, Jesus' enemies will try once again to trip him up.
 - c. They think he will speak against the Law of Moses (Mosaic law).
 - d. This is the Gospel you will hear at Mass on the Thirtieth Sunday of Ordinary Time.
3. Ask one person to volunteer to read the Gospel out loud, *slowly*: **Matthew 22:34-40**
4. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
5. Ask the group **one** of these questions:
 - ◆ "Is there a word, phrase, or image that touches your heart today? Feel free to share."
 - ◆ "Is there a person in the passage with whom you identify today? Feel free to share."
 - ◆ "Does anything in the passage unsettle or challenge you today? Feel free to share."

(During this time, please do not offer any comment or judgment on what people choose to share.)
6. After the group has shared their initial thoughts and insights, provide them with the following information: (Use only as needed. These are provided for facilitating discussion in your group and do not have to be used in their entirety. Use what you are comfortable with to stimulate discussion.)
 - a. This gospel account is part of the section of Matthew's Gospel which contains the final teachings of Jesus; soon the account of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection begins.
 - b. The question posed is meant to test Jesus. You can feel the tension between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees developing.
 - c. For the Jews, the commandments within the Mosaic law were important. (There were 613 of them.) They guided all aspects of life. The Law was the path to God. All must be kept.
 - d. The query is not whether some laws can be disregarded but whether Jesus, like some teachers, would sum up the Mosaic law in a simple statement.
7. Read the Gospel out loud a second time, *slowly*.
8. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
9. Invite any other sharing, and allow the dialogue to move and develop. (Again, facilitators are encouraged to refrain from passing judgment or comment)
10. Help to draw out the following understandings during your discussion: (use as needed)
 - a. In this passage, Jesus summarizes the whole of the Mosaic Law in two commandments.
 - b. Jesus' first commandment enjoins love of God with one's whole heart, soul and mind. This commandment, known as the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4-9), is recited twice a day by

Jews. The Greek word *ischys* denotes **strength**, power, might, force, and ability. Jesus' version changes the word "might" to "mind," but he was still stressing total devotion to God with all that a person has and is.⁷

- c. The Greek word *kardia*, or **heart**, is used over 800 times in Scripture. It never refers to the physical organ, but rather "the heart" meant "the center of one's knowing and willing, as well as one's feeling."⁸
- d. The Greek word *psuché* means **soul**, life, self. In Biblical thought, the "soul" and "mind" stood for one's life and energies. The English word *psyche* comes from the same Greek root, and psyche means one's distinct identity and unique personhood.
- e. The second commandment, love of neighbor, is from the Holiness Code (Lev. 19:18), which asserts that the love of God is manifest in love toward the neighbor.
- f. The modern Western notion of the necessity of self-love would have been a foreign concept to people of the biblical world. They did not understand themselves in individualistic terms but rather as enmeshed in a particular family, clan, or religious group.
- g. With people in biblical times being dependent on others for their sense of self-identity, the commandment to love self and love one's neighbour were inseparable in Jesus' time. This sense of interdependence on one another is mostly missing in today's western society, which places high value on individualism and independence. Some immigrant cultures around us today still cherish interdependence instead of independence.

11. Conclude with a vocal prayer such as the *Our Father* or *Hail, Mary*.

⁷ Prendergast, Archbishop Terrence, SJ. *Living God's Word: Reflections on the Sunday Readings for Year A*, p. 152.

⁸ Ibid.

November

The Parable of the Three Talents

1. Begin with the prayer on page 5.
2. Share the following background information with your group:
 - a. A parable generally invites the hearer to imagine himself or herself in the role of one of the actors. Jesus uses parables to convey potent—often hidden—messages or truths about the gifts we have been given and about how to employ them correctly to help build the Kingdom of God.
 - b. Grace is “God’s free, loving gift to us, his helping goodness, the vitality that comes from him. Through the Cross and Resurrection, God devotes himself entirely to us and communicates himself to us in grace. Grace is everything God grants us, without us deserving it in the least.”⁹
 - c. You will hear this Gospel at Mass on the second last Sunday of the Church year—the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time..
 - d. As we read this Gospel, make a mental note of any word, phrase or image that captures your attention.
3. Ask one person to volunteer to read the Gospel out loud, *slowly*: **Matthew 25:14-30**.
4. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
5. Ask the group **one** of these questions:
 - ◆ “Is there a word, phrase, or image that touches your heart today? Feel free to share.”
 - ◆ “Is there a person in the passage with whom you identify today? Feel free to share.”
 - ◆ “Does anything in the passage unsettle or challenge you today? Feel free to share.”

(During this time, please do not offer any comment or judgment on what people choose to share.)

6. Share the following information with your group:
 - a. “God’s grace brings us into the inner life of the Holy Trinity, into the exchange of love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It makes us capable of living in God’s love and of acting on the basis of this love... The fact that we are saved is God’s grace, pure and simple, which nevertheless demands the free cooperation of the individual.”¹⁰
 - b. A talent was an ancient unit of mass/weight, and many ancient Mediterranean civilizations used the term. Since a denarius was the usual payment for a day’s labour, a talent was roughly the value of twenty years of work by an ordinary person.
 - b. By our baptism, the master (Jesus) has entrusted to each of us a portion of his “possessions,” a share in his divine life. He has given us talents and responsibilities, and he expects us to risk using them *for his glory*, not our own.
 - c. This parable warns against the dangers of sloth, where God-given blessings and abilities are squandered because of fear and laziness.

⁹ *YouCat: the Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 338.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 341.

- d. God expects us to take the chances we encounter to use the gifts and talents we are given. He expects us to step out and to risk our own comfort for the sake of God's kingdom. He wants us to take constant chances with our lives and goods for his name's sake. Don't stifle your life to hang on to it at all costs; to do that is to lose it. Surrender to Christ's cause, again and again. That is the way to find life.
 - e. The Lord has entrusted lots of things to us: natural talents, spiritual gifts, the saving truth of the Gospel, money. He expects us not just to conserve these things, but *to grow them*.
7. Read the Gospel out loud a second time, *slowly*.
8. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
9. Invite any other sharing, and allow the dialogue to move and develop. (Again, facilitators are encouraged to refrain from passing judgment or comment)
10. Help to draw out the following understandings during your discussion: (use as needed)
- a. Whatever labor we are involved in—economic, family, apostolic—our goal should be to develop, increase, and grow what God has given us, for his honor and glory.
 - b. The faithful slaves are generously rewarded because they were responsible and used what was given to them. Their personal diligence meant they received superior gifts and responsibilities.
 - c. The week before the parable of the talents is proclaimed, we hear the parable of the ten bridesmaids: five who stayed awake and ready; five who did not. Being watchful demands fruitful action and even boldness, so we may be proper stewards of what God has given us.
 - d. Faithfulness to God means having the courage to take bold initiatives, in pastoral life, family life, and business, to be creative—even entrepreneurial—to express our gratitude to God for all that He has given us by making what he has given us grow.
 - e. All the gifts of nature and grace which God has given us should yield a profit. It does not matter how many gifts we have received; what matters is our generosity in putting them to good use.
11. Conclude with a vocal prayer such as the *Our Father* or *Hail, Mary*.

December

Jesus and John the Baptist

1. Begin with the prayer on page 5.
2. Share the following background information with your group:
 - a. After Vatican II, the Church introduced a *three-year cycle for Scripture readings* to allow more of the Bible to be heard. Each Sunday celebration has four passages from Scripture (including one from the Psalms). The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are used in cycle A, B, and C, respectively. The Gospel of John is used throughout the Easter season, as well as Advent, Christmas, and Lent, as appropriate.
 - b. The Church year begins with the season of Advent. This Church year we move to Cycle B, using mainly the Gospel of Mark.
 - c. In today's Gospel we hear the testimony of John the Baptist who bears witness to Jesus, the light.
 - d. This Gospel will be proclaimed at Mass on the Third Sunday of Advent. This Sunday is also known as *Gaudete* (Latin for *Rejoice!*) Sunday, and sometimes rose-coloured vestments are worn during Mass.
 - e. As we read the Gospel together, make a mental note of a word or phrase that captures your attention.
3. Ask one person to volunteer to read the Gospel out loud, *slowly*: **John 1:6-8, 19-28**.
4. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
5. Ask the group **one** of these questions:
 - ◆ "Is there a word, phrase, or image that touches your heart today? Feel free to share."
 - ◆ "Is there a person in the passage with whom you identify today? Feel free to share."
 - ◆ "Does anything in the passage unsettle or challenge you today? Feel free to share."

(During this time, please do not offer any comment or judgment on what people choose to share.)

6. After the group has shared their initial thoughts and insights, provide them with the following information: (Use only as needed. These are provided for facilitating discussion in your group and do not have to be used in their entirety. Use what you are comfortable with to stimulate discussion.)
 - a. The Gospel of John is largely devoted to revealing the heavenly identity and mission of Jesus, and it was known as the 'spiritual Gospel' in the ancient Church. Its most pervasive theme was to reveal God as a family: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In John's Gospel, the Word is a Divine Person—God the Son.
 - b. The Gospel of John does not begin with the birth of Jesus, but begins instead with how everything began with the Word who was God.
 - c. In biblical tradition, the Word is the powerful utterance of God that brought all things into being at the dawn of time, as well as the Wisdom of God who laboured alongside

- God at creation.¹¹ In this Word was life and light for all human persons. God's expressing himself, commanding, calling, and creating is one of the primary themes of the Bible.¹²
- d. John the Baptist is Jesus' cousin, since John's mother, Elizabeth, and Jesus' mother, Mary, were cousins. God's purpose for John's ministry was for him to bear witness to the light, the Word, the Messiah. John first did this by leaping in Elizabeth's womb when Mary's greeting reached Elizabeth's ears.
 - e. John baptizes with water for repentance; John knows that the baptism Jesus brings will bring about salvation... eternal life with God. When John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, Jesus' public ministry began.
7. Read the Gospel out loud a second time, *slowly*.
8. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
9. Invite any other sharing, and allow the dialogue to move and develop. (Again, facilitators are encouraged to refrain from passing judgment or comment)
10. Help to draw out the following understandings during your discussion: (use as needed)
- a. In Scripture, a prophet was an individual who received a call from God to be God's spokesperson. When God called these prophets, they had no choice but to deliver that word to those to whom God directed it. St. Stephen, the first martyr, pointed out that all prophets were persecuted (Acts 7:52). John the Baptist is the last and greatest of the prophets of the Old Covenant.
 - b. In Scripture, Jesus praises John the Baptist as the greatest person born, yet also says that the least in the kingdom of God is even greater than John. (Matthew 11:11).
 - c. When questioned about who he is, John quotes the prophet Isaiah (see Is. 40:3) saying that he is "the voice of one crying out in the desert, make straight the way of the Lord." With this quote, John triggers in his hearers all the promises in Isaiah about the Messiah. John is a messenger to prepare the way for Jesus who will bring people out of darkness and into God's light.
 - d. What John says about himself in quoting Isaiah 40:3 is stated in all four Gospels.
11. Conclude with a vocal prayer such as the *Our Father* or *Hail, Mary*.

¹¹ *The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: New Testament, Second Catholic Edition RSV*. Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2010, p. 161

¹² Stern, David H., *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, Jewish New Testament Publications, Clarksville, Maryland, 1992, p. 153.

January

Baptism of the Lord

1. Begin with the prayer on page 5.
2. Share the following background information with your group:
 - a. Saint Mark's Gospel is the first one written, and scholars agree that it was written before the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E. Mark was a disciple of St. Peter (1 Peter 5:13), and accompanied St. Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). Mark wrote primarily for a Gentile audience in Rome, and explained many (unfamiliar) Jewish customs to them.
 - b. Two themes predominate in Mark's Gospel:
 - i. that the type of Messiah sent by God to his chosen people—a suffering servant Messiah—was not the kind of Messiah expected by an occupied Jewish people (they wanted a worldly king and conqueror who would defeat the occupying Romans)
 - ii. that Jesus is truly the Son of God, as we will hear God the Father himself say in this passage.
 - c. You will hear this Gospel proclaimed on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.
 - d. As we read this Gospel, make a mental note of any word, phrase, or image that captures your attention.
3. Ask one person to volunteer to read the Gospel out loud, *slowly*: **Mark 1:7-11**.
4. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
6. Ask the group **one** of these questions:
 - ◆ “Is there a word, phrase, or image that touches your heart today? Feel free to share.”
 - ◆ “Is there a person in the passage with whom you identify today? Feel free to share.”
 - ◆ “Does anything in the passage unsettle or challenge you today? Feel free to share.”

(During this time, please do not offer any comment or judgment on what people choose to share.)

5. After the group has shared their initial thoughts and insights, provide them with the following information: (Use only as needed. These are provided for facilitating discussion in your group and do not have to be used in their entirety. Use what you are comfortable with to stimulate discussion.)
 - a. In Jesus' time, only slaves removed and carried sandals for their masters. The prophet John is so humble that he doesn't even feel worthy to do that for his cousin, Jesus, whom he knows is the Messiah promised by God to Israel.
 - b. There is a close connection between the Spirit and a dove in the Book of Genesis, when the spirit of God swept over the formless void and darkness that existed before Creation. Later Noah sends out a dove to hover over the flood waters once creation was cleansed and renewed. Jesus' baptism in the Jordan publicly marks a new beginning for a fallen world that will culminate in Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection.
 - c. The sacrament of baptism allows each of us to enter into Jesus' relationship with the Father through the Spirit. We are indelibly marked as members of God's own family.

- d. When Mark says the heavens were “torn apart,” he used a Greek word that he uses only once more: when the Temple veil is *torn apart* on the day of the Crucifixion (15:38).
 - e. “The **voice** of the Father, the Baptism of the **Son**, and the descent of the **Spirit** mark this episode as a revelation of the Blessed Trinity.”¹³
 - f. The Father audibly proclaimed his entire delight in his Son for all to hear. The Holy Spirit was also present as Jesus began his ministry as God’s suffering Servant as he rose from the waters of the Jordan River. He allowed himself to be numbered among sinners and submitted himself entirely to his Father’s will out of love for God’s people.
6. Read the Gospel out loud a second time, *slowly*.
 7. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
 9. Invite any other sharing, and allow the dialogue to move and develop. (Again, facilitators are encouraged to refrain from passing judgment or comment)
 10. Help to draw out the following understandings during your discussion: (use as needed)
 - a. Why did Jesus participate in a baptism of repentance, if he was the Son of God? Fr. Robert Barron suggests that Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan by John signals the whole point of Jesus life and ministry. God does not need us; he created us out of freely bestowed love. Human sinfulness had broken the covenant with God, so God sent his Son, Jesus, to show us the way back to communion with our heavenly Father.¹⁴
 - b. In Mark’s Gospel, John has one function: to point the way to Jesus. His call to conversion to God through baptism and the forgiveness of sins—plus his clothes and his food—make him the new Elijah sent by God to “prepare the way of the Lord.”
 - c. Jesus comes from Nazareth to be baptized by John in the Jordan. Mark makes it very clear that it is God the Father who blesses Jesus, rends the heavens, sends the Spirit, and says to Jesus: “You are my Son, the beloved; with you I am well pleased.” Similarly, God descends on us Christians in baptism, resulting in us also becoming favored daughters and sons of God in virtue of our union with the Son, Jesus Christ.¹⁵
 - d. The disciples come to recognise how Jesus let the Spirit present at his baptism lead him to a life of service and, eventually, suffering and death. They interpret his impending death as a second “baptism” which they too will share.¹⁶
 11. Conclude with a vocal prayer such as the *Our Father* or *Hail, Mary*.

¹³ *The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: New Testament, Second Catholic Edition RSV*. Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2010, p. 65.

¹⁴ Fr. Robert Barron, “The Bending Low of the Son of God” homily recorded January 13, 2008. Accessed on August 19, , at <http://www.wordonfire.org/resources/homily/the-bending-low-of-the-son-of-god/781/>

¹⁵ *The Collegeville Bible Commentary: New Testament*. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1992, p. 906.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

February

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

1. Begin with the prayer on page 5.
2. Share the following background information with your group:
 - a. Leprosy is a skin disease that infects human skin, garments, and homes. Jewish priests diagnosed this condition, and its carriers were identified as ritually unclean and then excluded from the social and religious life of Israel. Since anyone who touched a leper also became ritually unclean, it was scandalous for Jesus to cure this man by touching him.
 - b. You will hear this Gospel proclaimed on the Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time, which is February 15, .
 - c. As we read this Gospel, make a mental note of any word, phrase, or image that captures your attention.
3. Ask one person to volunteer to read the Gospel out loud, *slowly*: **Mark 1:40-45**.
4. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
5. Ask the group **one** of these questions:
 - ♦ “Is there a word, phrase, or image that touches your heart today? Feel free to share.”
 - ♦ “Is there a person in the passage with whom you identify today? Feel free to share.”
 - ♦ “Does anything in the passage unsettle or challenge you today? Feel free to share.”

(During this time, please do not offer any comment or judgment on what people choose to share.)

6. After the group has shared their initial thoughts and insights, provide them with the following information: (Use only as needed. These are provided for facilitating discussion in your group and do not have to be used in their entirety. Use what you are comfortable with to stimulate discussion.)
 - a. Life for lepers in biblical time was marginal, cut-off, lifeless, and hopeless. They had no access to community or religious life, to normal social interaction or affection, and had difficulty finding enough food, clothing, and shelter.
 - b. The healing of the outcast leper is a remarkable scene coming early in Mark’s Gospel. Jesus cautions the man to tell only the priest who has the sole authority to let him rejoin the community from which his sickness has kept him. When the healed leper tells everyone, he endangers Jesus and makes it impossible for him to go into the towns.
 - c. Jesus wanted people to hear the truth about what he was teaching about God the Father, *not* have sensationalized miracle stories that might make people think he was a political and military leader who would overthrow the Romans. He also did not want his enemies to move against him until the appointed time of his Passion.
 - d. The Greek word translated here as “moved with pity” is a word that means “to be moved as to one’s bowels,” hence it means to be moved with compassion, or to have compassion (for the bowels were thought to be the seat of love and pity). We see in this parable the infinite depths of divine compassion.

7. Read the Gospel out loud a second time, *slowly*.
8. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
9. Invite any other sharing, and allow the dialogue to move and develop. (Again, facilitators are encouraged to refrain from passing judgment or comment)
10. Help to draw out the following understandings during your discussion: (use as needed)
 - a. In this Gospel, Mark is asking all Christian followers to take Jesus seriously and at his word. To be a Christian means to respond to Jesus with faithfulness and to act as he does. Jesus knows what is best, whether he says to be made clean or to tell no one anything, he has excellent reasons for saying what he does.
 - b. *To be moved with pity* or *to have compassion* are oft-repeated injunctions in the Old Testament. The Law and the Prophets say frequently that the “poor,” the “widow,” the “orphan,” and the “stranger” must be protected, and show how deeply rooted should be the feeling of compassion in the hearts of the righteous in Israel. The Christian allows Christ to live his life in him or her, thus bringing about—in virtue of our union with Christ—the response God asks of us.
 - c. “Compassion is sometimes the fatal capacity for feeling what it is like to live inside somebody else’s skin. It is the knowledge that there can never really be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you, too.” ~ Fredrick Buechner, Presbyterian minister and author
 - d. Think about the people who we treat as lepers in our times. Identify in your own mind who is excluded from the life of our communities for religious, moral, social, ethnic, economic, or cultural reasons. Think about whom you put a buffer zone that you will not cross... Jesus wants us to reach across those zones and heal people.
 - e. St Augustine symbolically equated leprosy with mortal sin, the spiritual disease which extinguishes grace from the soul and impedes one’s full participation in the Church.¹⁷
11. Conclude with a vocal prayer such as the *Our Father* or *Hail, Mary*.

¹⁷ *The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: New Testament RSV Second Catholic Edition*, San Francisco, 2010, p. 20.

March

For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son

1. Begin with the prayer on page 5.
2. Share the following background information with your group:
 - a. Today's Gospel reading challenges us to be and do what will bear the light of Christ. It is Jesus' message to Nicodemus, then passed to us, which explains why God has sent His Son. We are asked to love and come to the light, that all we are and all that we do—even though we are being thoroughly tested—may be seen to have *only* what is divinely created and divinely approved.
 - b. You will hear this Gospel proclaimed on the Fourth Sunday of Lent.
 - c. As we read this Gospel, make a mental note of any word, phrase, or image that captures your attention.
3. Ask one person to volunteer to read the Gospel out loud, *slowly*: **John 3:14-21**
4. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
5. Ask the group **one** of these questions:
 - ◆ “Is there a word, phrase, or image that touches your heart today? Feel free to share.”
 - ◆ “Is there a person in the passage with whom you identify today? Feel free to share.”
 - ◆ “Does anything in the passage unsettle or challenge you today? Feel free to share.”

(During this time, please do not offer any comment or judgment on what people choose to share.)

6. After the group has shared their initial thoughts and insights, provide them with the following information: (Use only as needed. These are provided for facilitating discussion in your group and do not have to be used in their entirety. Use what you are comfortable with to stimulate discussion.)
 - a. This Gospel passage comes in the middle of a discourse between Nicodemus and Jesus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin (the Great Sanhedrin was the ‘supreme court’ of Israel in Jesus’ time), and he was a secret disciple of Jesus.
 - b. John portrays the saving nature of Jesus’ death by having Jesus tell Nicodemus the story of Moses and the poisonous serpents (from Numbers 21:4-9). Because they rebelled against the Law, God punished the Israelites with poisonous serpents. In the story, the serpent’s venom caused human death. Moses prayed (interceded) on behalf of the people, and God told him that anyone who looked to the serpent on the pole in search of God’s mercy would find it.
 - c. Jesus sees the serpent on a pole as an image of his own crucifixion. The Greek word used for raising up the serpent means both “lifted up” and “exalted.” John implies two things here: Jesus being lifted up on the cross during the crucifixion, and Jesus being resurrected and ascending into glory at his Father’s right hand.
 - d. John 3:16 is one of the most famous passages in the New Testament. It embodies the truth that *God has come to all people* (both Jews and Gentiles) in Jesus, the Messiah. The purpose of Jesus’ incarnation is for *salvation*, not condemnation.

- e. However, it's also clear that those who do not rely on Jesus—who do not believe in him—have put themselves outside the covenant with God. They have chosen to reject the light of faith and have instead chosen spiritual darkness and death.
7. Read the Gospel out loud a second time, *slowly*.
8. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
9. Invite any other sharing, and allow the dialogue to move and develop. (Again, facilitators are encouraged to refrain from passing judgment or comment)
10. Help to draw out the following understandings during your discussion : (use as needed):
 - a. This story is proclaimed in Lent because it is a prophecy of Jesus' passion; "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up." The Son of Man being lifted up is an allusion to his being lifted up on the cross. Jesus implicitly is prophesying his suffering, crucifixion and resurrection.
 - b. God's desire is that everyone created in God's image and likeness should live with God forever. Everyone lives forever, but whether they live with God forever, or without God, is their own choice. God sent his Son to become fully human—like us—to show us the way back to life with God.
 - c. Condemnation is a particularly jarring and harsh term. Those who do not believe are already condemned because they continue to reject the one whom God has sent. *They have brought condemnation upon themselves* by separating themselves from the possibility of this new and eternal life.
 - d. The final three verses of this passage echo Isaiah 59:2 that people's sins and injustices have hidden God's face from them. However, those who seek the light—who live the truth—welcome it, and welcome the Light of the world, the Son of God. God sent his Son into the world to save it, not to condemn it. By listening and responding to God's Son, and believing in his name, one is saved.
11. Conclude with a vocal prayer such as the *Our Father* or *Hail, Mary*.

April

The Upper Room: Seeing is Believing

1. Begin with the prayer on page 5.
2. Share the following background information with your group:
 - a. Today's passage recounts the story of doubting Thomas. Thomas, the apostle, was not there when Jesus appeared to the others after the Resurrection on Easter Sunday evening. When he hears Jesus is alive, Thomas tells the others that he needs to see proof before he will believe.
 - b. Most of the apostles come to faith through seeing the Lord and hearing his voice: first, Mary Magdalene; then Peter and John; then the other apostles. Thomas must see and touch. In his Gospel, John carefully recounts the reactions of all the people of his own time to the news of the Resurrection.
 - c. In the Jubilee Year 2000, at the Mass for the canonization of St. Faustina Kowalska, Pope John Paul II proclaimed that the Sunday after Easter will be called Divine Mercy Sunday. This Gospel is proclaimed on that day.
 - d. As we read this Gospel, make a mental note of any word, phrase, or image that captures your attention.
3. Ask one person to volunteer to read the Gospel out loud, *slowly*: **John 20: 19-31**
4. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
5. Ask the group **one** of these questions:
 - ◆ "Is there a word, phrase, or image that touches your heart today? Feel free to share."
 - ◆ "Is there a person in the passage with whom you identify today? Feel free to share."
 - ◆ "Does anything in the passage unsettle or challenge you today? Feel free to share."

(During this time, please do not offer any comment or judgment on what people choose to share.)
6. After the group has shared their initial thoughts and insights, provide them with the following information: (Use only as needed. These are provided for facilitating discussion in your group and do not have to be used in their entirety. Use what you are comfortable with to stimulate discussion.)
 - a. A key passage here is when Jesus breathes out the Holy Spirit on the disciples. God is Love and God breathes out only love and mercy. Jesus shares that Holy Spirit with the disciples. The Holy Spirit which is the love of the Father for the Son, and of the Son for the Father, now draws the disciples into the communion of God, empowering them to do what God does—live in love.
 - b. Jesus is raised with *the same body* that was crucified and died only days earlier. He carries the marks of his earthly sacrifice with him into heaven.
 - c. You can find several 'recognition' scenes in Scripture when Jesus is recognized after the Resurrection. Mary weeping at the now-empty tomb, the two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus, and the scene that focuses on doubting Thomas. Thomas finally becomes a believer when Jesus gives him unmistakable proof that he is alive, and Jesus praises those who would believe without seeing.

7. Read the Gospel out loud a second time, *slowly*.
8. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
9. Invite any other sharing, and allow the dialogue to move and develop. (Again, facilitators are encouraged to refrain from passing judgment or comment)
10. Help to draw out the following understandings during your discussion : (use as needed):
 - a. In the Upper Room at the beginning of this passage, the disciples have not yet been transformed, since they have not seen Jesus. They are afraid that they may be next to be killed. Jesus arrives and gives them the same mission the Father gave him for the sake of the world: as Spirit-bearers, to be instruments through which others come to saving faith.
 - b. In John's Gospel, the power of binding and loosing of sins is a consequence of the divine Spirit living in the community.
 - c. Eyewitness accounts were important so that witnesses could attest to the world about what they had experienced. Witnesses who change their lives and lifestyles so completely as a result of what they have seen, heard, and come to believe become who Jesus called all disciples to be: Spirit-infused bearers of *Christ-with-us* in the world. "These are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31)
 - d. Thomas is known to history as "doubting Thomas." But through his story, we learn that physical proximity to Jesus yields no greater advantage when it comes to being a witness. The witness of the apostles is unique and foundational, and those who believe today without the visual proofs offered to the disciples build their witness upon the apostles' irreplaceable foundation.
 - e. In our mission to reveal the God who is Love, we have been given a helper to both enliven and enlighten us. As Jesus is *God-with-us* (Emmanuel), the Holy Spirit is *Christ-with-us*. The Spirit is delivered over as Jesus dies on the cross (19:30), symbolized immediately after by the flow of sacramental symbols of blood and water from Jesus' side. Jesus breathes the Spirit out on the disciples in the Upper Room, and the Spirit is sent as Jesus takes his place with his Father (Pentecost). "Every step in Jesus' exaltation is accompanied by a gift to us of his Spirit."¹⁸
11. Conclude with a vocal prayer such as the *Our Father* or *Hail, Mary*.

¹⁸ *The Collegeville Bible Commentary: New Testament*; p.1016, 1019.

May

The Commissioning of the Disciples

1. Begin with the prayer on page 5.
2. Share the following background information with your group:
 - a. Today's passage recounts the time when Jesus meets with the disciples on a mountain in Galilee and gives them what becomes known as "the Great Commission." This is Jesus' final instruction to the disciples—to all who believe in him—when he returns to his Father.
 - b. Jesus confers his own authority on the eleven disciples to preach the gospel and "make disciples" as witnesses of his Resurrection.
 - c. You will hear this Gospel proclaimed on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity.
 - d. As we read this Gospel, make a mental note of any word, phrase, or image that captures your attention.
3. Ask one person to volunteer to read the Gospel out loud, *slowly*: **Matthew 28:16-20**.
4. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
5. Ask the group **one** of these questions:
 - ◆ "Is there a word, phrase, or image that touches your heart today? Feel free to share."
 - ◆ "Is there a person in the passage with whom you identify today? Feel free to share."
 - ◆ "Does anything in the passage unsettle or challenge you today? Feel free to share."

(During this time, please do not offer any comment or judgment on what people choose to share.)

6. After the group has shared their initial thoughts and insights, provide them with the following information: (Use only as needed. These are provided for facilitating discussion in your group and do not have to be used in their entirety. Use what you are comfortable with to stimulate discussion.)
 - a. Matthew's Gospel is distinctive for its highlighting of the Jewishness of Jesus.
 - b. The setting of this Gospel passage is on a mountain. Mountains have a religious symbolism for biblical cultures since they are "closer to God" who was believed to dwell in the heavens (as in the sky). For the Jewish people, God revealed himself to Moses and gave him the Law. When Jesus is specifically situated on a mountain in the Gospels, the writer usually intends to evoke the image of Jesus as the new Moses.
 - c. Matthew, in particular, has six significant mountain "scenes" in his Gospel: Jesus' temptation (4:8); the Sermon on the Mount (5:1); a number of healings (15:29); the Transfiguration (17:1); Jesus' final discourse (24:1); and **the commissioning of the Apostles (28:16)**.
 - d. Until this point, Jesus has always insisted that his mission was to "the lost sheep of the House of Israel" (10:6; 15:24). Now Jesus explicitly tells the disciples to go to "all nations." Their mission is threefold: make disciples, baptize, and teach.
 - e. Matthew's Gospel emphasizes Jesus as the authoritative Teacher and gives weight to the ecclesial and ethical implications of discipleship. These features make Matthew's Gospel a powerful teaching tool and pastoral aid.

7. Read the Gospel out loud a second time, *slowly*.
8. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
9. Invite any other sharing, and allow the dialogue to move and develop. (Again, facilitators are encouraged to refrain from passing judgment or comment)
10. Help to draw out the following understandings during your discussion : (use as needed):
 - a. Note the past tense in Verse 17: “All authority and power has been given to me.” It is God the Father who has bestowed divine authority on Jesus as the Son of Man. He is the ambassador of the Father with full authority to make commitments and obligations. The authority is that of the Kingdom of God. Because Jesus has God the Father’s full authority, he can commission others to work in his behalf.
 - b. “While Matthew has depicted the women as apostles who are commissioned in 28:7-10, he excludes them from the commission to preach to all the nations.”¹⁹
 - c. Baptism is a sacrament of initiation. Being baptized “in the name” signifies that those who are baptized belong to the one triune God. By belonging to the Name, they owe allegiance to the one God and all He represents and manifests. After being baptized and having received the Holy Spirit, the baptized are to be instructed in all the doctrines. In the early Church, the Eucharist was not explained until after baptism.
 - d. Through baptism (of water and spirit), God takes the Christian into his family where the Christian has the status of a child rather than of a slave (who indeed belonged to the household but had no “family” rights or inheritance).
 - e. The final verse of the Gospel repeats the assurance given in Mt. 1:23 (“and they shall call him Emmanuel which means ‘God is with us,’”) and 18:20 (“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them”). Jesus promises that despite the weak faith and failures of his followers, Jesus will always remain with the community that ministers in his name.²⁰
 - f. Jesus is Emmanuel (which means ‘God is with us,’) the divine presence (in Hebrew: *Shekinah*) with his people as they make decisions, study, pray, preach, baptize and teach. He is with us because we are in covenant with the Father and we are all always part of God’s family through his Son, Jesus, in the Holy Spirit.
11. Conclude with a vocal prayer such as the *Our Father* or *Hail, Mary*.

¹⁹ *The New Collegeville Bible Commentary: New Testament*. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 2009, p. 90.

²⁰ *Ibid*.

June

Jesus Calms the Storm

1. Begin with the prayer on page 5.
2. Share the following background information with your group:
 - a. In the Old Testament, *God alone* has the powers to still the stormy seas. In today's Gospel, Jesus reveals his divinity by showing his authority over nature in calming the wind and the sea.
 - b. Versions of this story of the calming of the sea appear in all four Gospels.
 - c. You will hear this Gospel at Mass on the 12th Sunday of Ordinary Time.
 - d. As we read this Gospel, make a mental note of any word, phrase, or image that captures your attention.
3. Ask one person to volunteer to read the passage out loud, *slowly*: **Mark 4: 35-41**.
4. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
5. Ask the group **one** of these questions:
 - ◆ "Is there a word, phrase, or image that touches your heart today? Feel free to share."
 - ◆ "Is there a person in the passage with whom you identify today? Feel free to share."
 - ◆ "Does anything in the passage unsettle or challenge you today? Feel free to share."

(During this time, please do not offer any comment or judgment on what people choose to share.)

6. After the group has shared their initial thoughts and insights, provide them with the following information: (Use only as needed. These are provided for facilitating discussion in your group and do not have to be used in their entirety. Use what you are comfortable with to stimulate discussion.)
 - a. Jesus has been spending time with the Jewish people, but now he asks to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee—Gentile territory.
 - b. Even though the disciples have been travelling with Jesus, camping and eating with him, learning from him about the kingdom of God, they still do not grasp who he is. Jesus has spoken in parables to the crowds and, in private, explained what the parables meant to his disciples (Mark 4:34). However, they are still without understanding. When he calms the winds and the waters, he is showing them who he is.
 - c. The phrase used by Jesus to describe the disciples' fear is only used one other time in Scripture: when the sailors decide to throw Jonah overboard during a great storm and he is swallowed by a whale. The phrase means "they were fearing a great fear."²¹ In the early church, Jonah became a symbol for Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.
 - d. Mark wrote this text for the early Christian community. We believe that Scripture is divinely inspired and meant for people of all times and places. Being in the 'boat' of the Church with Jesus and the Christian community is not always smooth sailing. However, Jesus is in the 'boat' with us and can calm the storms. Be still.

²¹ Megan McKenna, *On Your Mark: Reading Mark in the Shadow of the Cross*. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2006, p. 61.

- e. Instead of speaking a parable as he has done up to now in Mark's Gospel, Jesus *enacts* a parable that evokes echoes of Scripture for his disciples. Seeing Jesus calm the storm caused them some alarm and triggered their question, 'Who is this?' They would know that many psalms tell of God's power over creation (Ps. 65:7, Ps. 89:9, 93:4, 107:29). "As a [living] parable, Jesus is like a lampstand that makes more visible the light of God's word."²²
7. Read the Gospel out loud a second time, *slowly*.
8. Pause for a time of silent reflection.
9. Invite any other sharing, and allow the dialogue to move and develop. (Again, facilitators are encouraged to refrain from passing judgment or comment)
10. Help to draw out the following understandings during your discussion : (use as needed):
 - a. The Church couples this Gospel with the story of Job who complained about the fierce storm he endured, but never lost his trust in the Lord.
 - b. "The episode at the sea evokes the drama of the Christian life. All of God's children embark with Christ on a life that is full of dangerous storms..."²³ These storms help Christians realize that they need to call on the Lord for help because they are powerless over the storms and other assaults that take place on the Christian journey. Only our Lord's near presence can truly calm our fears.
 - c. People familiar with the Sea of Galilee will tell you that sudden storms do occur frequently.
 - d. Whenever we find Jesus in a boat with the disciples, we encounter an image of the Church, the bark (a type of boat) of Peter. Although Jesus asleep on a cushion while the storm goes on sounds odd to us, the Church Fathers interpreted that situation like this: Jesus is *always* a source of peace and serenity, even in the midst of storms.
 - e. During the storms of life, whether personal or within the world we inhabit, we need to learn to live out of that place of peace and serenity with Jesus. Finding—and then dwelling in—that place of peace is the work of the Christian life.
 - f. St. Augustine looked at this story like this: when you are baptized, you have Christ living in you. If baptized persons allow the Christ in them to go to sleep by a kind of neglect—being away from Church, being away from Scripture, being away from the sacraments—then when the storms come, they will flail about like the disciples in the story. Only when they reawaken Christ can he calm the storm.²⁴
11. Conclude with a vocal prayer such as the *Our Father* or *Hail, Mary*.

²² *The New Collegeville Bible Commentary: New Testament*. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 2009, p. 126.

²³ *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: New Testament*, p. 21, 73.

²⁴ Fr. Robert Barron, "The Storm at Sea" homily recorded June 21, 2009. Accessed on August 19, , at <http://www.wordonfire.org/resources/homily/the-storm-at-sea/845/>.

Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your hearts.

~ Deut. 6: 4-6

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before God no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.

~ Heb. 4: 12-13

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

~ Ps. 119: 105



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