

The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

TODAY

Ezekiel 33:7–9
Romans 13:8–10
Matthew 18:15–20

MONDAY

Luke 6:6–11
"Stretch out your hand."

TUESDAY

Luke 6:12–19
"They had come to hear him and to be healed . . ."

WEDNESDAY

Luke 6:20–26
"Blessed are you who are poor . . ."

THURSDAY*

Matthew 1:1–16, 18–23
" . . . for he will save his people from their sins."

FRIDAY

Luke 6:39–42
"Can a blind person guide a blind person?"

SATURDAY

Luke 6:43–49
"No good tree bears bad fruit . . ."

*Feast of the of the Blessed Virgin Mary

A Very Important Debt

Recently, *The Economist*, reported on an academic study conducted in England examining how character is formed. The study revealed that the most important influence on whether young people developed a healthy and wholesome character was their parents. If parents disciplined their children, held them accountable for their behavior, and practiced "tough love" with them, the children would grow up shaped by the values of the community. When children did not receive this parental guidance, they were much more likely to be shaped by the social norms of the changing culture.

What this study also revealed was that many parents today, at least in England, were reluctant to provide the parenting that their children needed so badly. Too many parents, it seems, didn't want to fulfill their parental obligations, preferring instead to be their children's friends.

The National Study of Youth and Religion (conducted in the U.S.) offers us additional thought on this matter. According to Dr. Christian Smith, the head of this ongoing study, the role of the faith community is almost as important as the role of the parent. The more members of the Church who are engaged in the lives of young people, the more likely it is that these young people will develop a strong faith of their own.

All three Scripture readings from this Sunday emphasize the point that we have a responsibility to other members of the faith community. As the reading from Ezekiel says, we have an obligation to speak up as God's witness so that others may hear and understand God's message of salvation and choose whether to accept it.



The Faith of the Church

Chastity is a necessary virtue in order to live a healthy, holy, and wholesome life. It allows us to do what is right, good, and truly loving in the areas of relationships and sexuality. As we master the virtue of chastity, we learn to cherish human dignity, treasure sexuality as a gift, and to treat everyone respectfully. Cultivating this virtue requires the practice of decency and modesty through self-mastery and self-control (Cf. *Catechetical Formation in Chaste Living*, USCCB 2007).



Questions of the Week

Giving witness to your faith is an important way to spread the Gospel. People make judgments about faith based upon what they see us do not on what we say.

Adults

What one thing can I do this week to show people how my faith shapes my life?

Children

What can I do this week to show others that I believe in Jesus?

Visit us at www.FaithFirst.com (click on "Gospel Reflections") and share today's Gospel reading as a family.

Responding to God's Word . . .

The Scripture readings this week emphasize in different ways the importance of "fraternal correction," done with love. This means that when we see someone doing something that might cause harm, we have an obligation to express this concern.

Such correction is currently out of favor in today's world. People seem to feel that what they do is nobody else's business and that they can do anything they want without reproach.

This attitude reveals the rise of individualism and the corresponding loss of community that is a part of modern culture. The loss

of the communal has serious consequences for Christians, both as a people of faith and as individuals.

One way to address this loss of community is to begin to develop closer relationships with people in our parishes who are living examples—witnesses—of what it means to follow Christ. Ask them to serve as our mentors. But also, be open to serving as mentors for others. While we may recognize our own unworthiness, others still look to us as living examples of what it means to follow Christ.

We don't always have to use words to offer loving correction. Frequently, our actions alone will be enough.

SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

In the home. Have each family member identify three things they do well. Then, offer to teach other family members how to do those things.

In the workplace or in school. Look for non-threatening ways to be a mentor to coworkers or fellow students.

In the community. Participate in activities within your community so that you can learn more about your neighbors. Work to build a sense of community with them.



Meditation Moment

George Anderson was a chaplain at New York's Riker's Island prison. One night he was praying with a small group of prisoners over the story of the Good Samaritan. A mentally disturbed prisoner, Richard, was present for the first time. The room was cold, and Richard was wrapped in two blankets. The prisoner opposite him was shivering. At one point while the group was praying in silence, Richard suddenly got up, walked over to the shivering man, and put a blanket around him. Richard's silent action witnessed not only to Jesus' words to us about loving others, but also to Jesus' presence among us when we gather in his name.

For reflection . . .

Can I recall a time when I felt moved by Jesus' words or his presence in a group?

WHEREVER YOU SEE ANOTHER, THERE I AM.

BIBINICAL SAYING

FROM VISION BY MARK LINK, SJ

Speaking the Truth in Love

Father in Heaven,
You call us to love
ourselves and to love everyone
we meet. Sometimes, showing
our love for others is very difficult
to do because it requires us to speak
the truth to them, a truth that they
may be unwilling to hear. Give us the
strength to be your witnesses
to the world, to have the courage to
speak the truth to others through
our words and actions, to always
be faithful witnesses to your
love. In all things, let us be
guided by humility
and compassion.
Amen.

Carry this thought in your heart
as a guide for your faith journey
this week.

Owe no one anything, except
to love one another; for the
one who loves another has
fulfilled the law.

Romans 13:8

Profile in Faith

Pope Paul VI (Giovanni Montini) (1897–1978)

emphasized just how important it is for families to live healthy, wholesome, and holy lives, and how these families benefited Church and society equally. He was a fearless shepherd who challenged Catholics to live lives of faith so that they would not be seduced by the moral tenor of today's culture.

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May 23, 2011

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Front: iStockphoto

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