



SEASON SIX

HEART OF THE HOME

Small Group Content

DIOCESE OF DALLAS YOUNG ADULTS



Why Small Groups

Welcome to Season Six of Young Adult Small Groups for the Diocese of Dallas! We are elated that you have opted to join us as we dive into the scriptures and hope that the time you spend with your small group is both fulfilling and life giving.

These Young Adult Small Groups have been developed to: support your communal foundation by helping you build authentic friendships with young adults who are striving to live out their Catholic faith, connect your realities to those of the Saints who have sought to live out their baptismal call, and make the weekly readings come to life!

About the Author

Danielle Bianchi earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Theology from the University of Notre Dame and is a graduate of the school's Echo Program in Catechetical Leadership. Her professional career has included experience in parish catechetical ministry as well as teaching theology at the high school level. She is a proud native of Dallas and resides in the area with her husband and four kids.



**YOUNG ADULT
SMALL GROUPS**
— DIOCESE OF DALLAS —



How to Use the Small Group Content

Each week has the same layout:

- Feast in Focus Summary
- Recipe
- Opening Prayer
- Weekly Scripture Readings
- Reflection
- Spiritual Reading
- Group Discussion Questions
- Closing Prayer
- Live in the Word Weekly Challenge

There is likely more content than you can cover each week, and that allows your group the flexibility to decide which content is most beneficial to use.

For the Recipes:

We hope that you will try many of the recipes and pairing suggestions that are given each week to add to your experience of fellowship. Decide as a group how you will prepare for each meeting:

- If meeting in person, consider having different group members sign up to prepare the food and others bring sides, drinks, and paper goods each week.
- Alternatively, depending on the size of your group and the servings that each recipe yields, you could have several people sign up to make the recipe each week to make sure that you have enough food for everyone.
- If meeting virtually, each person can try the recipe themselves and enjoy the food “together” during the meeting time.

*Please note that some of the recipes include a suggested drink pairing. We recommend only offering alcohol at your small group gatherings if all members are over 21, as to not exclude anyone from the group.



Week 0

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Begin the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or you can pray together the Our Father:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come.
thy will be done
on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

Group Discussion Questions

- Have everyone briefly introduce themselves: name, job, family, interests/hobbies
- What reasons have brought you to this small group?
- Have you been in a small group before? If yes, what did you find fruitful about those experiences?
- What are you hoping to get out of our time together? And what gifts do you hope to share with the group?
- Each week of this season, we will be focusing on a different liturgical feast day and its traditions for food and celebration. What, if any, are your traditions or experiences with celebrating the liturgical year?

October 3, 2021

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Feast in Focus

This week the Church celebrates the Memorial of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus on October 1. The 19th century French saint is one of the most beloved in the Church, and is perhaps best known for her spirituality of the “little way”— seeking holiness through the ordinary moments of our everyday lives.

Thérèse’s understanding of holiness was undoubtedly rooted in her upbringing, as she was raised by parents who were eventually canonized together in 2015— Sts. Louis and Zélie Martin. Louis and Zélie oriented every aspect of their lives around their faith in God, as they endeavored to reach heaven and raise their children to do the same. Though the family endured many struggles, including the loss of 4 of their children in infancy, Louis and Zélie modeled the importance of focusing on heaven as our ultimate home. Thérèse’s family stands as a testament to her parents’ holy witness, as she and her four sisters all entered religious life.

Thérèse spent almost a decade in the convent, quietly serving God through small sacrifices. At the age of 24, she endured a painful battle with tuberculosis that eventually took her life. Thérèse reportedly requested a chocolate éclair on her death bed, as it was her favorite dessert.

In honor of St. Thérèse’s feast day, enjoy making this chocolate Éclair Cake, an easier twist on the classic French pastry. A charcuterie board with baguette slices, French cheeses (try Brie, Gruyere, or Roquefort), and cured meats is another great option. For a wine pairing, your favorite rosé would be an excellent nod to Thérèse’s vow to “let fall a shower of roses” from heaven as she spends her eternity doing good on earth.

Opening Prayer

Begin the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or you can use the following prayer from the USCCB:

Lord our God,
we bless you.

As we come together to ponder the Scriptures,
we ask you in your kindness

to fill us with the knowledge of your will
so that, pleasing you in all things,
we may grow in every good work.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Then invite one member of the group to read aloud this Sunday’s Gospel reading below. As you listen, pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you from the reading.

ECLAIR CAKE

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 25 minutes

Servings: 12

INGREDIENTS:

Crust:

1 cup water

1/2 cup butter

1 cup all-purpose flour

4 large eggs

Filling:

1 8-ounce package cream
cheese, softened

1 (5.1 ounce) box vanilla
instant pudding

3 cups milk

Topping:

1 (8 ounce) container cool
whip (optional substitute:
homemade whipped
cream)

Chocolate syrup

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Lightly grease a 13"x9" glass baking pan.

2. For the Eclair Crust: In a medium saucepan, melt butter in water and bring to a boil. Remove from heat. Stir in flour. Mix in one egg at a time, mixing completely before adding another egg. Spread mixture into pan, covering

the bottom and sides evenly. Mixture will be very wet. *If the sides of your pan are too greased you won't be able to get the mixture to stay up the sides so make sure to just lightly grease.

3. Bake for 30-40 minutes or until golden brown. You may want to check it occasionally to make sure the crust does not overcook. Remove from oven and let cool (do not touch or push bubbles down).

4. For the Filling: Whip cream cheese in a medium bowl. In separate bowl make vanilla pudding by beating the pudding mix and the milk for 3 minutes and put in the fridge until set. Make sure pudding is thick before mixing in with cream cheese. Slowly add pudding to cream cheese, mixing until there are no lumps. Let cool in the fridge. When the crust is completely cooled, pour filling in. Top with a layer of cool whip. Serve with a drizzle of chocolate syrup.

Éclair Cake from
[The Girl Who Ate Everything](#)



Weekly Scripture Readings

Genesis 2:18-24

"The Lord God said: 'It is not good for the man to be alone...'"

Psalms 128:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6

"May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives."

Hebrews 2:9-11

"He who consecrates and those who are being consecrated all have one origin."

Mark 10:2-16

The Pharisees approached Jesus and asked, "Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?" They were testing him. He said to them in reply, "What did Moses command you?" They replied, "Moses permitted a husband to write a bill of divorce and dismiss her." But Jesus told them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate." In the house the disciples again questioned Jesus about this. He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

Reflection

"No man is an island," as the poet John Donne wrote, pointing to the universal human experience. The Genesis 2 creation account in the First Reading reveals a similar truth, with God's acknowledgement that "it is not good for the man to be alone" (Gn. 2:18). While this passage certainly refers to the intimate bond between a husband and wife in marriage, it also stands as a commentary on the human condition overall, as we are made by God as relational beings, drawn towards community with each other.

From the Christian perspective, the human need for companionship also serves a deeper purpose— as the Church, we are collectively the Body of Christ precisely because we need support from one another as we try to understand and follow God's desires for our lives.

This week's Gospel presents Jesus as clarifying God's desires for marriage to the Pharisees. He acknowledges that Moses allowed the Israelites to divorce, but that this was a concession made in the Deuteronomic Law because of the hardness of their hearts. Throughout salvation history, God's Revelation is gradual; He progressively reveals Himself in human history, culminating in the coming of Christ. Jesus came to expand our view of who God is and how He calls us to live, and in this section of Mark's Gospel, is calling His followers to a higher standard of understanding and following God's plans for marriage.

The same is true for our individual relationships with God— God always meets us where we are, and gradually calls us into deeper communion with Him. And as the Genesis 2 narrative highlights, God recognizes our need for support in this pursuit of holiness and wants to provide us with companionship.

Consider the people that God has put in your path at this point in your life, perhaps the very

people participating in this small group experience with you. Ask God to provide ways for you to build authentic connections with them, so you can accompany each other in your journeys to better understand and follow God's will.

Spiritual Reading

From St. Thérèse's autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, regarding her experiences of loneliness as a young child:

"...I resolved to consecrate myself in a special way to Our Blessed Lady, and I begged to be enrolled among the Children of Mary. To gain this favour I had to go twice a week to the Convent, and I must confess this cost me something, I was so shy. There was no question of the affection I felt towards my mistresses, but, as I said before, I had no special friend among them, with whom I could have spent many hours like other old pupils. So I worked in silence till the end of the lesson, and then, as no one took any notice of me, I went to the tribune in the Chapel till Papa came to fetch me home. Here, during this silent visit, I found my one consolation—for was not Jesus my only Friend? To Him alone could I open my heart; all conversation with creatures, even on holy subjects, wearied me. It is true that in these periods of loneliness I sometimes felt sad, and I used often to console myself by repeating this line of a beautiful poem Papa had taught me: 'Time is thy barque, and not thy dwelling-place.' Young as I was, these words restored my courage, and even now, in spite of having outgrown many pious impressions of childhood, the symbol of a ship always delights me and helps me to bear the exile of this life."

Group Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you from the Gospel reading?
- How has God gradually revealed Himself to you throughout your relationship with Him?
- At this point in your relationship with God, how might God be calling you to grow deeper in your communion with Him?
- What experiences have helped you grow in authentic Christian relationships in the past?
- The excerpt from St. Thérèse's autobiography emphasizes the importance of looking to Jesus to ultimately meet our need for friendship. Do you consider your relationship with Jesus to be a "friendship"? Why or why not?
- How can you work on cultivating your friendship with Jesus this week?

Closing Prayer Suggestion

To conclude your time together in prayer, ask the group members if anyone has any intentions that they would like the group to pray for in the coming week. Then pray together "The Litany of Trust" for an increase in child-like abandonment to Jesus.

Live in the Word

This week, intentionally pray for the other members of your small group, that through your time together this season, they will find authentic Christian companionship.

The Litany of Trust

Written by Sr. Faustina Maria Pia of the Sisters of Life

From the belief that I have to earn Your love ... **Deliver me, Jesus.**
From the fear that I am unlovable ... **Deliver me, Jesus.**
From the false security that I have what it takes ... **Deliver me, Jesus.**
From the fear that trusting You will leave me more destitute ... **Deliver me, Jesus.**
From all suspicion of Your words and promises ... **Deliver me, Jesus.**
From the rebellion against childlike dependency on You ... **Deliver me, Jesus.**
From refusals and reluctances in accepting Your will ... **Deliver me, Jesus.**
From anxiety about the future ... **Deliver me, Jesus.**
From resentment or excessive preoccupation with the past ... **Deliver me, Jesus.**
From restless self-seeking in the present moment ... **Deliver me, Jesus.**
From disbelief in Your love and presence ... **Deliver me, Jesus.**
From the fear of being asked to give more than I have ... **Deliver me, Jesus.**
From the belief that my life has no meaning or worth ... **Deliver me, Jesus.**
From the fear of what love demands ... **Deliver me, Jesus.**
From discouragement ... **Deliver me, Jesus.**
That You are continually holding me, sustaining me, loving me ... **Jesus, I trust in you.**
That Your love goes deeper than my sins and failings, and transforms me ... **Jesus, I trust in you.**
That not knowing what tomorrow brings is an invitation to lean on You ... **Jesus, I trust in you.**
That You are with me in my suffering ... **Jesus, I trust in you.**
That my suffering, united to Your own, will bear fruit in this life and the next ... **Jesus, I trust in you.**
That You will not leave me orphan, that You are present in Your Church... **Jesus, I trust in you.**
That Your plan is better than anything else ... **Jesus, I trust in you.**
That You always hear me, and in Your goodness always respond to me ... **Jesus, I trust in you.**
That You give me the grace to accept forgiveness and to forgive others ... **Jesus, I trust in you.**
That You give me all the strength I need for what is asked ... **Jesus, I trust in you.**
That my life is a gift ... **Jesus, I trust in you.**
That You will teach me to trust You ... **Jesus, I trust in you.**
That You are my Lord and my God ... **Jesus, I trust in you.**
That I am Your beloved one ... **Jesus, I trust in you.**
Amen.

October 10, 2021

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Feast in Focus

October 4 is the Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi, the Italian saint often associated with a love of animals and nature. Francis was born into a wealthy family, and as an adult he heard Christ calling him to rebuild the Church. Francis, thinking this meant to physically rebuild the local church building, stole one of his father's horses to sell for necessary funds. Francis' father was outraged at his actions, and publicly accused him of theft. Francis decided to renounce all of his family's wealth, including the very clothes he was wearing at the time. From that point on, Francis considered God to be his only father and embraced a life of poverty.

Francis eventually realized that Christ had been calling him to rebuild the Church from within, and dedicated himself to living a life in imitation of Christ. He started the religious order that is known as the Order of Friars Minor, as well as an order of religious sisters under the leadership of his friend, St. Clare. Although he never became a priest, his witness and preaching were responsible for converting many others to Christianity.

Towards the end of his life, Francis experienced a vision of an angel following a 40-day fast. He then became the first person recorded in history to receive the stigmata—the five wounds of Christ in his hands, feet, and side.

Francis died in 1226, and tradition holds that although he was committed to fasting for most of his life, he did request one of his favorite desserts on his deathbed: an Italian cookie called "Mostaccioli" that is similar to biscotti. To commemorate his feast day, try this recipe for almond biscotti, or "almond slices", that has been attributed to St. Clare. Setting up a coffee bar with various flavored syrups would be a great way to accompany the dessert.

Opening Prayer

Begin the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or you can use the following prayer from the USCCB:

Lord our God,
we bless you.

As we come together to ponder the Scriptures,
we ask you in your kindness
to fill us with the knowledge of your will
so that, pleasing you in all things,
we may grow in every good work.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Then invite one member of the group to read aloud this Sunday's Gospel reading below. As you listen, pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you from the reading.



PALETTA DI MANDORLA (ALMOND SLICES)

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Servings: about 50 slices

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup butter

1 1/2 cup sugar

4 eggs

4 cups flour

2 cups almonds, whole, finely chopped,
or 4 cups almonds, ground

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon vanilla

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Cream the butter, sugar, and eggs. Add the other ingredients and knead until smooth.
3. Form 2 rolls about 1-inch in diameter each, and place on a baking sheet.
4. Bake rolls for 10-12 minutes until golden brown.
5. When cool, cut into slices 3/4 inch (2 cm) thick, and toast slices in the oven for 3 minutes.

Adapted from [Cooking with the Saints](#)

Weekly Scripture Readings

Wisdom 7:7-11

"I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me"

Psalms 90:12-13, 14-15, 16-17

"Fill us with your love, O Lord,
and we will sing for joy!"

Hebrews 4:12-13

"Indeed the word of God is living and effective..."

Mark 10:17-30

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother." He replied and said to him, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words. So Jesus again said to them in reply, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God." Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who

has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come."

Reflection

When have you felt most "on fire" with your faith? Was it after a deeply spiritual experience on a retreat? Or during a powerful, charismatic religious conference? Or perhaps when God helped bring you out of a period of suffering and trial, and you were able to truly feel the consolation of God's presence?

I imagine that the man who approaches Jesus in this week's Gospel was in the midst of a high point in his spiritual journey. Perhaps he had heard Jesus preaching, witnessed one of His miracles, or seen the transformation in a friend who had an encounter with Jesus. He eagerly runs to Jesus, kneels down before him in humble homage, and genuinely asks what he must do to gain eternal life.

Jesus' response to the young man reiterates the importance of adherence to the Law. But Jesus reveals that love of neighbor is not enough; ultimately, God wants our whole hearts. And tragically, despite the man's initial zeal in coming before Christ, he is unable to detach himself from his love of money for the sake of love of God.

Jesus acknowledges to His disciples that it is indeed impossible for us as humans to devote our whole hearts to God. It is possible, though, with the grace of God (Mk 10:27). The choice that we each must make is whether we are willing to cooperate with the grace that God is offering to us.

Mark chooses to include a subtle though significant detail in his account: Jesus looked at the man, and loved him (Mk 10:21). Jesus knew that the man

would be unwilling to renounce his possessions for the sake of the Gospel, and yet still loved him. As you consider what Jesus might be asking you personally to be willing to let go of to make room for a deeper devotion to God, contemplate the loving gaze of Jesus looking at you, inviting you into a life more joyful and fulfilling than you could ever dare to imagine for yourself.

Spiritual Reading

From The Writings of Saint Francis of Assisi, on “the Virtues putting Vices to flight”:

“Where there is charity and wisdom there is neither fear nor ignorance. Where there is patience and humility there is neither anger nor worry. Where there is poverty and joy there is neither cupidity nor avarice. Where there is quiet and meditation there is neither solicitude nor dissipation. Where there is the fear of the Lord to guard the house the enemy cannot find a way to enter. Where there is mercy and discretion there is neither superfluity nor hardness.”

Group Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you from the Gospel reading?
- What have been the times in your life when you have felt most “on fire” with your faith?
- What has occurred in the seasons after those moments?
- What do you find to be the most difficult to detach yourself from for the sake of loving God above all— Possessions? Relationships? Habits?
- What regular spiritual practices do you (or can you) rely on to be open to receiving God’s grace?

- Of the virtues mentioned in the excerpt from The Writings of Saint Francis of Assisi, which one do you feel called to focus on cultivating now, and in what ways?

Closing Prayer Suggestion

To conclude your time together in prayer, ask the group members if anyone has any intentions that they would like the group to pray for in the coming week. Then pray together the following “Prayer of St. Francis” for an increased devotion to God above all.

Prayer of St. Francis

I beseech Thee, O Lord,
that the fiery and sweet strength of Thy love
may absorb my soul from all things that are
under heaven,
that I may die for love of Thy love
as Thou didst deign to die for love of my love.
Amen.

Live in the Word

This week, be intentionally aware of what you are most attached to in your life— possessions, relationships, or habits. Then ask the Holy Spirit to grant you the grace to desire a devotion to God above all else.

October 17, 2021

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Feast in Focus

This week on October 15th, the Church remembers St. Teresa of Ávila, a Spanish mystic, Doctor of the Church, and reformer of the Carmelite Order. Born in 1515 and raised as a devout Catholic by her mother, Teresa sought martyrdom at the age of 7 because she so desperately wanted to be a saint. She was stopped by an uncle who had seen her sneaking out of town and returned home. At the age of 20, she finally was able to join the Carmelites of the Convent of the Incarnation.

During her time with the Carmelites, Teresa struggled with illness. She once had a seizure that left her unconscious for four days and was amazed that the nuns had already dug her grave when she woke up. During these moments, she grew tremendously in her faith, having experienced “devotions of silence” and “blessings of tears” that enabled her to better understand the humility needed for absolute surrender to God.

As Teresa’s love for God grew, she became frustrated with the relaxed religious life within the Convent of the Incarnation. After discernment, prayer, and conversations with her spiritual advisor, she decided to devote herself to reforming the Carmelites. During the last few years of her life, she founded 6 convents and laid the foundation for another 16 convents and 16 monasteries that were completed over the next 15 years.

In honor of St. Teresa, try the following recipe for yemas, a Spanish dessert that has traditionally been prepared in Spain to celebrate her feast day. A spread of Spanish tapas would also be fitting—look for cured Spanish chorizo, Manchego cheese, and Spanish olives, served alongside slices of crusty bread. Mix up a pitcher of red sangria or pick up a bottle of Spanish Tempranillo wine to complete your celebration.

Opening Prayer

Begin the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or you can use the following prayer from the USCCB:

Lord our God,
we bless you.

As we come together to ponder the Scriptures,
we ask you in your kindness
to fill us with the knowledge of your will
so that, pleasing you in all things,
we may grow in every good work.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Then invite one member of the group to read aloud this Sunday’s Gospel reading below. As you listen, pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you from the reading.

TRADITIONAL SPANISH YEMAS DE SANTA TERESA

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Servings: 8

INGREDIENTS:

3 ounces water

1/2 cup granulated sugar

Optional: 1/2 lemon peel

6 egg yolks

1 cup powdered sugar

DIRECTIONS:

1. Begin by making the syrup. Measure the water and sugar in a medium saucepan. Dissolve the sugar by continually stirring while bringing the water to a boil. Add the lemon peel, if using. Continue to simmer until the mixture is a thick syrup, stirring often. Remove from heat and remove the peel.

2. In a mixing bowl, use a whisk to lightly beat the egg yolks.

3. Pour the beaten egg yolks into the syrup. Put the heat on the lowest setting, and stir the mixture slowly and continuously for 3 to 4 minutes

with a whisk, until the yolks begin to solidify. The mixture will start to pull away from the sides and bottom of the pan as it cooks.

4. Remove from heat and spoon the mixture onto a plate to cool.

5. Once the mixture is cool, sprinkle powdered sugar through a sieve onto a countertop or stone. Place the yolk mixture on top and roll it to cover it in sugar.

6. Pinch off a small bit of the yolk mixture (about the size of a golf ball or walnut). Use your hands to roll it into a ball, covering it in powdered sugar at the same time. Continue until all of it is rolled into balls, adding more powdered sugar if needed.

7. Place yemas on a plate and chill in the refrigerator. The powdered sugar on the outside will form a small crust as the balls cool.

8. Serve on a platter or placed in individual paper muffin cups.

From [The Spruce Eats](#)

Weekly Scripture Readings

Isaiah 53:10-11

"...through his suffering, my servant will justify many"

Psalms 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22

"Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you."

Hebrews 4:14-16

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way"

Mark 10:35-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." He replied, "What do you wish me to do for you?" They answered him, "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left." Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" They said to him, "We can." Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink, you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared." When the ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John. Jesus summoned them and said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Reflection

In the groundbreaking TV series about the life of Christ, *The Chosen*, James and John appear as zealous brothers eager to assume leadership positions for themselves above the other disciples. The first episode of season 2 depicts Jesus giving them their nicknames, "Sons of Thunder," after they angrily ask Jesus to bring down fire upon a group of Samaritans who threw rocks at them. In correcting James and John, Jesus clarifies for them what type of leaders he needs them to be: "As we gather others, I need you to show the way— to be humble."

While James and John's desire for a position of honor and glory is obviously misguided, their initial request of Jesus in this week's Gospel is universally relatable: "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you" (Mk 10:35). How often do we each approach Jesus in prayer with this attitude of wanting Him to do whatever we ask of Him?

Many of our requests of Jesus though do not come from misguided attempts for honor, but rather genuine desires for good things: perhaps a better job, a new relationship, or a cure for someone we love. We are each familiar with the pain and confusion that can come when these sincere requests are not answered in the way we had hoped.

At the heart of Jesus' denial of James and John's request is ultimately mercy; James and John cannot possibly understand the implications of what they are asking for. And though James and John also do not yet understand why their request is denied, Jesus is asking them to follow His example of humbly submitting to the will of the Father, whatever it may entail. As the Second Reading from Hebrews assures us, Jesus is able to sympathize with us in our struggle to submit to God's plans above our own, and is ready to offer us the mercy and the grace we need.

Spiritual Reading

From St. Teresa of Ávila's *The Way of Perfection*:

"...for humility brought Him down from Heaven into the Virgin's womb and with humility we can draw Him into our souls by a single hair. Be sure that He will give most humility to him who has most already and least to him who has least. I cannot understand how humility exists, or can exist, without love, or love without humility, and it is impossible for these two virtues to exist save where there is great detachment from all created things."

Group Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you from the Gospel reading?
- How would you describe your usual disposition in approaching God in prayer?
- What has been or is your greatest struggle with accepting God's will for your life?
- The Second Reading from Hebrews assures us that Jesus is able to sympathize with us in our weakness because he experienced the full range of human suffering. How have you experienced Jesus accompanying you in your weakness?
- St. Teresa states that humility cannot exist without love, as love cannot exist without humility. What does this mean to you?
- Who in your life is a model of these two virtues working together?

Closing Prayer Suggestion

To conclude your time together in prayer, ask the group members if anyone has any intentions that they would like the group to pray for in the coming week. Then pray together following prayer attributed to St. Teresa of Ávila.

"Guided by You" - A Prayer of St. Teresa of Avila

Lord, grant that I may always allow myself to be guided by you,
always follow your plans, and perfectly accomplish your holy will.
Grant that in all things, great and small, today and all the days of my life,
I may do whatever you may require of me.
Help me to respond to the slightest prompting of your grace,
so that I may be your trustworthy instrument, for your honor.
May your will be done in time and eternity- by me, in me, and through me.
Amen.

Live in the Word

During your prayer time this week, focus on coming before the Father with a humble heart of openness to His will, and trust in His merciful goodness.

October 24, 2021

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Feast in Focus

The feast of St. Luke the Evangelist is celebrated on October 18. St. Luke was the only Gentile Gospel writer, and also authored the Acts of the Apostles. He converted to Christianity sometime after Jesus' death, and was a disciple of St. Paul. He was a Greek physician as well as an artist, and according to tradition, he painted the first icon of the Virgin Mary.

Luke's Gospel is marked by an emphasis on Jesus' ministry to the poor, outcasts, and women. Being a Gentile, he also wrote his account of Jesus' life from the perspective that salvation is open to all.

St. Luke's symbol is of an ox, as it is one of the creatures surrounding God's throne in the vision from chapter 4 of the Book of Revelation. Therefore, he is considered the patron saint of butchers (in addition to physicians and artists) and it is popular to celebrate his feast day by eating some form of beef.

These easy Cheeseburger Sliders are a great option to cook during the fall months when grilling season has passed. Be sure to add any of your favorite BBQ sides to go with them.

Opening Prayer

Begin the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or you can use the following prayer from the USCCB:

Lord our God,
we bless you.

As we come together to ponder the Scriptures,
we ask you in your kindness
to fill us with the knowledge of your will
so that, pleasing you in all things,
we may grow in every good work.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Then invite one member of the group to read aloud this Sunday's Gospel reading below. As you listen, pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you from the reading.

CHEESEBURGER SLIDERS

Prep Time: 8 minutes

Cook Time: 22 minutes

Servings: 24

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 lbs lean ground beef (90/10 or 93/7 fat content)
- 1/2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 large yellow onion, finely diced
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 8 slices of cheddar cheese
- 6 oz of shredded cheddar cheese (or used more sliced cheese)
- 24 dinner rolls (King's Hawaiian brand "Savory Butter" rolls are especially delicious)
- 2 tablespoons butter melted, plus more to grease baking sheet
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds (optional)

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Butter the bottom of a rimmed baking sheet.

3. Place a large skillet over medium/high heat with 1/2 Tbs olive oil. Add diced onion then the ground beef and break up with a spatula. Season with the salt, pepper, and garlic powder. Sauté over medium/high heat, breaking up the beef and cook just until cooked through then remove from heat.

4. Tilt skillet to spoon off and discard excess fat. Stir in the mayonnaise.

5. Cut buns in half. Place bottom half of dinner rolls on buttered baking sheet and line bread with sliced cheese. Spread ground beef mixture evenly over the sliced cheese, using the back of a spatula to square off the edges. Cover the ground beef with the shredded cheese.

6. Place the top of buns, cut-side down, over the burgers. Brush tops with the melted butter and immediately sprinkle tops with sesame seeds if using. Bake for 15 minutes, or until cheese is melted and tops are golden brown.

Adapted from [Natasha's Kitchen](#)

Weekly Scripture Readings

Jeremiah 31:7-9

"They departed in tears, but I will console them and guide them"

Psalms 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

"The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy"

Hebrews 5:1-6

"...it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high priest, but rather the one who said to him: *You are my son: this day I have begotten you*"

Mark 10:46-52

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging. On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, "Son of David, have pity on me." Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you." He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus. Jesus said to him in reply, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man replied to him, "Master, I want to see." Jesus told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

Reflection

"Master, I want to see." Bartimaeus' bold proclamation in this week's Gospel summarizes the longing of God's people in salvation history leading up to the coming of Christ. The nation of Israel had been living in darkness, unable to save themselves from the power of sin, and waiting for generations for the Messiah to show them the way. As the prophecies promised that a "Son of David" would be the anointed one, the Israelites' expectations were connected to King David's son, King Solomon— as Solomon had possessed the power to heal and exorcise demons, the Jewish tradition anticipated the Messiah would do the same.

What is extraordinary about Bartimaeus' confession though is that he was in fact a Gentile; his recognition of Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah therefore represents the acceptance of Jesus among the Gentiles when many of His own Jewish people rejected his identity. The people of Israel in Jesus' day struggled to see past their own vision of who the Messiah would and should be.

We see the strength of Bartimaeus' trust in Jesus even before he asks Jesus to restore his sight— Biblical scholars suggest that the cloak he was wearing would have held the coins he collected from begging on the side of the road. His decision to throw off his cloak to run to Jesus therefore reveals not only his belief that Jesus is the Son of David with the power to heal him, but also his willingness to sacrifice everything to follow Him.

As we cling to the sinful habits in our lives, it can be difficult to envision what our life would be like if we were willing to throw them aside. We are each called by God to walk in the light of Christ, and as Bartimaeus shows us, the necessary first step is trusting that the life God has planned for us is so much more glorious than what we can see on our own.

Spiritual Reading

One of the most well-known passages from the Gospel of Luke is “The Canticle of Zechariah” (Luke 1:68-79):

“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited and brought redemption to his people. He has raised up a horn for our salvation within the house of David his servant, even as he promised through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old: salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to show mercy to our fathers and to be mindful of his holy covenant and of the oath he swore to Abraham our father, and to grant us that, rescued from the hand of enemies, without fear we might worship him in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord- to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God by which the daybreak from on high- will visit us to shine on those who sit in darkness and death’s shadow, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

Group Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you from the Gospel reading?
- When has God’s presence and activity in your life turned out to be different from your expectations?
- What sorts of situations, environments, or attitudes make it more difficult for you to see God’s path for you?
- Why do you think we are sometimes reluctant to let go of sinful habits in our lives?

- What does it mean to you to “walk in the light of Christ”?
- Review “The Canticle of Zechariah”- how do Zechariah’s words speak to you personally in your spiritual journey?

Closing Prayer Suggestion

To conclude your time together in prayer, ask the group members if anyone has any intentions that they would like the group to pray for in the coming week. Then pray together the Nunc dimittis prayer that comes from “The Canticle of Simeon” (Luke 2:29-32) and is traditionally prayed as part of Night Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours.

Nunc dimittis (The Canticle of Simeon)

Now, Master, you let your servant go in peace.
You have fulfilled your promise.
My own eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all peoples.
A light to bring the Gentiles from darkness; the glory
of your people Israel.
Amen.

Live in the Word

This week, plan a time to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, so you may more fully walk in the light of Christ.

October 31, 2021

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

Feast in Focus

Sts. Simon and Jude share a feast day on October 28. Both were apostles of Jesus, and were inspired by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to travel to spread the Good News to others. Simon first traveled to Mesopotamia while Jude set out for Egypt, and they both ended up preaching in Persia. They are believed to have been martyred on the same day, which is why they are honored with the same feast day.

Not much is known about Simon, but the New Testament identifies him as “Simon the Zealot” to distinguish him from Simon Peter. He therefore belonged to the Jewish political group known as the Zealots for their emphasis on inciting rebellion against the Roman rule.

As for Jude Thaddeus, he was the brother of James the Lesser, and probably was a fisherman prior to following Jesus. St. Jude is well-known as the patron saint of hopeless or impossible causes.

This week’s recipe is in honor of St. Jude, and is a so-called “impossible pie” because it makes its own crust while it bakes, thus being impossibly easy to throw together. The pumpkin flavor is perfect for the season, and don’t forget to brew a pot of coffee to sip with your dessert.

Opening Prayer

Begin the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or you can use the following prayer from the USCCB:

Lord our God,
we bless you.

As we come together to ponder the Scriptures,
we ask you in your kindness
to fill us with the knowledge of your will
so that, pleasing you in all things,
we may grow in every good work.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Then invite one member of the group to read aloud this Sunday’s Gospel reading below. As you listen, pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you from the reading.



IMPOSSIBLE PUMPKIN PIE

Prep Time: 8 minutes

Cook Time: 40 minutes

Servings: 6

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup canned pumpkin
- 1/2 cup Bisquick baking mix
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 cup evaporated milk
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine, softened
- 1 1/2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 eggs
- Whipped cream (for serving)

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Grease a 9-inch pie plate. Add all ingredients (except whipped cream) to a mixing bowl and blend until smooth. Pour into pie plate.
3. Bake until knife inserted into center comes out clean (about 35-40 minutes).
4. After pie has cooled, cut into slices and serve with whipped cream.

Adapted from [Catholic Cuisine](#)

Weekly Scripture Readings

Deuteronomy 6:2-6

"...you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength."

Psalms 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51

"I love you, Lord, my strength."

Hebrews 7:23-28

"He has no need...to offer sacrifice day after day, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did that once for all when he offered himself."

Mark 12:28b-34

One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "The first is this: Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, 'He is One and there is no other than he.' And 'to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself' is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Reflection

The Shema prayer is an ancient Jewish proclamation of faith in one God that defined the Israelites' unique identity as the people of Yahweh. Repeated here in Mark's Gospel, the prayer begins with the proclamation: "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone!" The opening lines of the prayer are originally found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, where they are accompanied by instructions for the Jewish people to recite the prayer continually throughout the day, teach it to their children, and even write it on the doorposts of their houses as a reminder of their commitment to the one God.

Jesus' teachings in this week's Gospel re-emphasize the importance of love of God above all. He reiterates how a devotion to God requires a love with our whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. This love then necessarily spills over into love of neighbor, as Jesus then re-emphasizes the second great commandment found in Leviticus (19:18).

The scribe in Mark's account then contributes a new insight on the Law- his statement that love of God and neighbor are "worth more than burnt offerings and sacrifices" reveals how moral laws were of greater importance than sacrificial laws. The Jewish sacrificial laws were actually not part of the original Mosaic Covenant, but were only added after the Golden Calf incident in the Book of Exodus as a way of keeping the Israelites from lapsing back into idolatry. Jesus' acknowledgement that the scribe is "not far from the kingdom of heaven" affirms the importance of re-focusing on love of God and neighbor above all.

As Christians today, we are certainly not bound by ancient Jewish sacrificial laws. But there is a beauty in the Jewish commitment to professing their faith in the one God that can absolutely enrich our prayer lives—the ancient Jewish people recognized how difficult it was for them to retain their faith in one God alone, particularly when constantly surrounded

by polytheistic influences. While the temptations we face today as Christians may look different, we also need a habit of praying “without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) throughout the day to help us stand firm in our love of God above all.

Spiritual Reading

Although there is some debate among Biblical scholars, the Letter of Jude found in the New Testament has traditionally been attributed to St. Jude Thaddeus. Reflect on the following excerpt from the end of this short epistle (verses 20-25):

But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. On those who waver, have mercy; save others by snatching them out of the fire; on others have mercy with fear, abhorring even the outer garment stained by the flesh.

To the one who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you unblemished and exultant, in the presence of his glory, 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.

Group Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you from the Gospel reading?
- What particular challenges do you face with loving God with your whole heart, mind, soul, and strength?
- What particular challenges do you face with loving your neighbor as yourself?

- Read John 13:34. How does this “new commandment” differ from the one given in Leviticus 19:18? How does this new dimension elevate how Jesus is calling us to love our neighbor?
- Does your regular prayer life include a way of praying without ceasing? How might you plan your day to intentionally re-direct your heart to God throughout the day?
- From the instructions given in the passage from the Letter of Jude, what does it look like to “build yourselves up in your most holy faith” and “keep yourselves in the love of God”?

Closing Prayer Suggestion

To conclude your time together in prayer, ask the group members if anyone has any intentions that they would like the group to pray for in the coming week. Then pray together the Act of Love.

Act of Love

O my God, I love you above all things with my whole heart and soul,
because you are all good and worthy of all my love.
I love my neighbor as myself for the love of you.
I forgive all who have injured me and I ask pardon of those whom I have injured.
Amen.

Live in the Word

This week, work on a habit of reciting the “Act of Love” a few times a day to re-focus your heart on love of God and love of neighbor.

November 7, 2021

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Feast in Focus

This week includes the celebration of All Saints' Day on November 1 followed by All Souls' Day on November 2. The Solemnity of All Saints celebrates all saints in the Church, both known and unknown. All Souls' Day then commemorates all those who have died as we pray for their souls.

In the Mexican tradition, these two feast days are marked by the celebration of Día de los Muertos, or the Day of the Dead. One of the most well-known customs includes ornate altars set up in honor of deceased relatives and friends, including photos of loved ones along with decorations as reminders of them.

There is of course also plenty of feasting, and one of the foods traditionally served for Día de los Muertos is Chicken Tinga. Tamales are also a popular food to enjoy if you are able to find some for your celebration. Another tradition is to serve the favorite drinks of deceased loved ones— consider inviting group members to bring a drink to share in honor of a family member or friend who has passed.

Opening Prayer

Begin the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or you can use the following prayer from the USCCB:

Lord our God,
we bless you.

As we come together to ponder the Scriptures,
we ask you in your kindness
to fill us with the knowledge of your will
so that, pleasing you in all things,
we may grow in every good work.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Then invite one member of the group to read aloud this Sunday's Gospel reading below. As you listen, pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you from the reading.



CHICKEN TINGA

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 45 minutes

Servings: 6

INGREDIENTS:

4-5 tablespoons of oil

1-2 large onions sliced

4-5 medium roma tomatoes

1 can of Chipotle chiles in Adobo

2-3 cloves of garlic

1 1/2 teaspoons salt, or to taste

1/4 teaspoon Mexican oregano

1/4 teaspoon dried thyme

1/4 teaspoon dried marjoram

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Cooked Mexican rice, corn tortillas, and/
or tostadas (for serving)

DIRECTIONS:

1. Bring a pot of salty water to a boil and add the chicken breast to cook. Let the chicken simmer until it is cooked through. Make sure you skim the foam that forms on top of the water as it starts boiling.

2. While the chicken is cooking, place the tomatoes in a medium saucepan, cover with water, bring to a simmer over medium-high heat and cook for 8 to 10

minutes, or until the tomatoes are soft and mushy but not falling apart.

3. Slice the onions thinly. Heat the oil in a large skillet and add the onion. Cook the onion until soft and translucent for about 5-6 minutes.

4. In a blender, throw the tomatoes, garlic, salt, pepper, and 2-3 chipotle chiles from the can. After blending the ingredients, taste the salsa and adjust the amount of salt and pepper as needed.

5. Pour the salsa over the onions. Add the oregano, marjoram, thyme, and pepper. (Be careful as the sauce will steam and bubble).

6. Simmer the sauce, occasionally stirring, until the sauce deepens in color, becomes darker and less soupy, about 7-8 minutes.

7. Take the chicken out of the broth and shred it with two forks. Add it to the sauce and mix well to incorporate.

8. Let it simmer for only a minute and serve over rice, in warm tortillas, or on tostadas.

Adapted from [The Bossy Kitchen](#)

Weekly Scripture Readings

1 Kings 17:10-16

"...the jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry"

Psalms 146:7, 8-9, 9-10

"Praise the Lord, my soul!"

Hebrews 9:24-28

"Christ...will appear a second time, not to take away sin but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him"

Mark 12:38-44

In the course of his teaching Jesus said to the crowds, "Beware of the scribes, who like to go around in long robes and accept greetings in the marketplaces, seats of honor in synagogues, and places of honor at banquets. They devour the houses of widows and, as a pretext recite lengthy prayers. They will receive a very severe condemnation." He sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents. Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, "Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood."

Reflection

Jesus' challenge to beware those who are seeking attention, status, and money remains relevant today. We all face the temptation to seek attention and acceptance, either through our in-person social interactions or perhaps through trying to grow our Instagram following. It is seen as ambitious

and even praiseworthy to dedicate our whole lives towards the pursuit of impressive job titles. And it is embedded into almost every aspect of American culture to desire wealth.

The widow in the Gospel account stands as a humble though striking contrast to the scribes in their long robes reciting length prayers. In giving her whole livelihood, the widow reveals her understanding that everything she has is a gift from God. This disposition enables her to freely give all that she has back to God. Through her radical act of generosity, she displays a radical trust that God will continue to provide all that she needs.

At the heart of our desires for attention, status, and money is often an inability to believe that God can and will provide all that we need, whether materially or socially. Behind the Church's call for stewardship of our time, talent, and treasure is a call to trust that God is our loving Father who is asking us to give all of ourselves to Him so that we may ultimately receive all.

As we reflect on the Communion of Saints this week, ask for their particular intercession for you in the area of generosity. Each saint has navigated their own unique journey in giving generously of themselves to God and the Church. Their mission now is intercede for each of us as we strive to live from a disposition of trust in God's goodness that enables us to give without cost.

Spiritual Reading

From *In My Words Own* by St. Teresa of Calcutta:

"Open your hearts to the love God instills in them. God loves you tenderly. What he gives you is not to be kept under lock and key, but to be shared. The more you save the less you will be able to give. The less you have, the more you will know how to share. Let us ask God, when it comes to ask God for something, to help us to be generous."

Group Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you from the Gospel reading?
- What do you see as the relationship between the quest for attention, status, and money?
- How would you describe your approach to charitable giving?
- Which is the easiest for you give freely: time, talent, or treasure?
- And which is the most challenging for you to give freely?
- How does the quote from St. Teresa of Calcutta affect your understanding of generosity?

Closing Prayer Suggestion

To conclude your time together in prayer, ask the group members if anyone has any intentions that they would like the group to pray for in the coming week. Then pray together the following Stewardship Prayer.

Stewardship Prayer (from the Diocese of Springfield)

Almighty God, we thank you for all the gifts You have given us: our lives, our loved ones, all that we have and all that we are. Most of all, we thank You for Jesus, your Son and our Redeemer, who came among us to show us the way to eternal life. Jesus was the perfect steward of your gifts, showing that complete trust in You is necessary, and that giving of self is a most important part of following Him. May the offerings of our time, our talents, and our material resources be made in the same spirit of sacrifice that Jesus taught us by His life and death for us.

Amen.

Live in the Word

This week, prayerfully choose a charitable organization which to generously give your time, talent, and/or treasure.

November 14, 2021

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Feast in Focus

The Memorial of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini occurs on November 12. A native of Lombardy, Italy, she was initially refused entry into a religious order but eventually was admitted. She later became the prioress of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart and was known as Mother Cabrini. She spent much of her time working in orphanages, and desired to be a missionary in China. Pope Leo XIII, however, sent her to work in New York City.

Once in the United States, Frances dedicated herself to starting an orphanage and ultimately was responsible for the foundation of 67 organizations to assist the poor, the uneducated, the abandoned, and the sick. She also had a particular outreach towards Italian immigrants in need.

Frances died in 1917 of malaria. She was canonized in 1946, thus becoming the first United States citizen to be canonized.

Enjoying an Italian meal would be a fitting way to celebrate Mother Cabrini's feast day. This recipe for Chicken Breasts Lombardy represents her birthplace, and would be great served with polenta, which is also typical of the more rustic food from the northern region of Italy. Any Italian wine would work well as a pairing to complete the meal.

Opening Prayer

Begin the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or you can use the following prayer from the USCCB:

Lord our God,
we bless you.

As we come together to ponder the Scriptures,
we ask you in your kindness
to fill us with the knowledge of your will
so that, pleasing you in all things,
we may grow in every good work.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Then invite one member of the group to read aloud this Sunday's Gospel reading below. As you listen, pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you from the reading.



CHICKEN BREASTS LOMBARDY

Prep Time: 40 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Servings: 6

INGREDIENTS:

6 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, quartered

½ cup all-purpose flour

6-8 tablespoons butter

Salt and pepper

1 ½ cups sliced mushrooms

¾ cup Marsala wine

¾ cup chicken stock

1 cup shredded Italian cheese blend

½ cup grated Parmesan cheese

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

2. Flatten chicken breasts between two pieces of wax paper to 1/8-inch thickness. Dredge pieces lightly in flour.

3. Melt 2 tablespoons butter in large

skillet. Place several pieces of chicken in the pan, being careful not to crowd the pan. Cook approximately 4 minutes per side, or until golden brown.

4. When browned, place chicken in a lightly greased 13 x 9 inch pan. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste.

5. Repeat browning with remaining chicken, adding butter each time. Reserve drippings.

6. Sauté mushrooms in the same pan with 2 additional tablespoons butter. Stir wine and chicken stock into the pan, scraping to deglaze the pan, and cook for about 10 minutes until sauce is reduced by 1/3.

7. Spoon sauce over chicken. Combine cheeses and sprinkle over chicken.

8. Bake for 10-15 minutes until cheese is melted.

Adapted from [Catholic Cuisine](#)

Weekly Scripture Readings

Daniel 12:1-3

"...those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever."

Psalms 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11

"You are my inheritance, O Lord!"

Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

"...this one offered one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat forever at the right hand of God; now he waits until his enemies are made his footstool."

Mark 13:24-32

Jesus said to his disciples: "In those days after that tribulation the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. "And then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in the clouds' with great power and glory, and then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky. "Learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that he is near, at the gates. Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. "But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Reflection

It must have been overwhelming for the disciples to hear that the sun will be dark, the moon will not give light, and the stars will fall from the sky. What Jesus was describing to His friends must have struck fear into their hearts and panic into their souls. Everything they knew was going to come to an end.

Recognizing their need for consolation, Jesus offered them words from the prophet Daniel: "and then they will see the 'Son of Man coming in the clouds' with great power and glory, and then He will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky" (Dn. 7:13-14). Jesus' reminder of Daniel's prophecy acknowledges to His disciples that He sees their potential confusion and fear, and wants to offer them consolation.

The world cannot give us all the peace and security we desire. But it also should not be a source of great fear and anxiety. Rather, we should look to and place our eyes on Christ, the Son of Man. If we fully trust in the God who loves us, there is the promise of peace. If we take the time to turn to God in prayer, He helps us through those times of fear and anxiousness.

There is an enormous spiritual significance in understanding Christ's proclamation that His word will not pass away, especially as we recall that He is the Word made flesh who dwelt among us (John 1:14). If He says that all things will end then we must prepare our hearts and souls each day for what may come. Not out of fear of the end, but in the anticipation and hope being counted as part of the elect gathered by His angels.

Spiritual Reading

From a letter of Mother Cabrini
to her missionary sisters:

“Be good then, detach yourselves from whatever is of earth, which is human and egoistic, and raise yourselves to the pure spheres where the air that surrounds you is filled with the love of God who lightens every pain and sweetens every burden. Work untiringly and charitably in the vast field of the Heart of Christ; do not disdain the rough manners of the peasants but look at their beautiful souls made to the image of Him who chose you to be His bride. When you are tired and worn out, praise God for thinking that for a missionary only that day is blessed in which she has worked hard, suffered for a holy cause, which is that of the missions of our holy vocation - co-operating with Christ for the salvation of souls.”

Group Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you from the Gospel reading?
- What is your reaction to the descriptions of coming “times of tribulation” in Scripture as in this week’s Gospel?
- How have you experienced the peace and consolation of Christ in the midst of fears or anxieties?
- How does the prophecy from Daniel affect your understanding of the “end times”?
- Does the idea that we know “neither the day nor the hour” affect how you live your life as a Christian? If so, in what specific ways?
- How can you apply Mother Cabrini’s instructions to your current Christian vocation?

Closing Prayer Suggestion

To conclude your time together in prayer, ask the group members if anyone has any intentions that they would like the group to pray for in the coming week. Then pray together the prayer of Mother Cabrini.

Prayer of Mother Cabrini

Jesus, fortify me with the grace of your Holy Spirit and give your peace to my Soul that I may be free of all needless anxiety, solicitude, and worry. Help me to desire always that which is pleasing and acceptable to You so that your will may be my own. Amen.

Live in the Word

This week, whenever you struggle with fears or anxieties, offer the prayer of Mother Cabrini for peace.

November 21, 2021

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Feast in Focus

The Solemnity of Christ the King was established by Pope Pius XI in 1925. He established the day in response to growing secularism and nationalism, to emphasize Christ's eternal reign as king regardless of national or political rule.

The feast day falls on the last Sunday of Ordinary Time of the liturgical year, as the following Sunday begins the season of Advent and a new liturgical year.

To commemorate the reign of Christ as king, prepare Chicken á la King as a clever play on the feast day. For dessert, any bundt cake can serve as a "crown" cake— a spiced cake would be an especially good seasonal option. And to drink, consider enjoying some Prosecco in celebration of the solemnity.

Opening Prayer

Begin the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or you can use the following prayer from the USCCB:

Lord our God,
we bless you.

As we come together to ponder the Scriptures,
we ask you in your kindness
to fill us with the knowledge of your will
so that, pleasing you in all things,
we may grow in every good work.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Then invite one member of the group to read aloud this Sunday's Gospel reading below. As you listen, pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you from the reading.

CHICKEN À LA KING

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Servings: 6

INGREDIENTS:

- ½ cup salted butter
- 8 ounces mushrooms sliced
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 ½ cups milk
- 2 egg yolks
- 1/3 cup heavy creamy
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 cup chopped drained pimientos
- 4 cups chopped cooked chicken
- Cooked rice, pasta, or biscuits for serving

DIRECTIONS:

1. In a large saucepan, melt butter over medium-high heat. Add in mushrooms and cook until mushrooms are soft, about 5 minutes.
2. Add in flour and stir until there are no more specks of flour left. Pour in chicken broth and milk and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer until sauce is thickened, about 3 minutes.
3. For a richer sauce: in a small mixing bowl, whisk together egg yolks with heavy cream. Working quickly, slowly pour in 1/2 cup of the hot mixture into the egg mixture while whisking vigorously. Immediately pour this mixture back into the saucepan, whisking the entire time. Cook 2 minutes more.
4. Stir in frozen peas, drained pimientos, and cooked chicken and let heat through, 2 to 3 minutes.
5. Serve hot over cooked rice, pasta, or biscuits.

Adapted from [The Stay at Home Chef](#)

Weekly Scripture Readings

Daniel 7:13-14

"His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away"

Psalms 93:1, 1-2, 5

"The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty."

Revelation 1:5-8

"Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth."

John 18:33b-37

Pilate said to Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own or have others told you about me?" Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not here." So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

Reflection

This week's Gospel features Pontius Pilate, who served Tiberius Cesar, the Roman Emperor. Pilate has little care for the Jewish people, and as such would not claim Jesus to be of greater authority than Tiberius. Instead, he asks Him if he is "King of the Jews." Jesus' response that His Kingdom does not belong to this world is likely shocking to Pilate, and even more so is His response that "for this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth." Pilate must have been stunned to hear these words and perhaps began questioning what is actually "truth."

Christianity recognizes that truth is a beautiful thing. Observationally, it is a quality that is incredibly attractive. Think of some of the most truthful people you know— those people who understand truth and listen to God's voice are people that we naturally gravitate towards. Even when truth can initially be challenging to accept, it is ultimately what we each long for.

In a sense, truth is celebrated along with the Solemnity of Christ the King. When Pope Pius XI established the feast in 1925, he wrote: "That these blessings may be abundant and lasting in Christian society, it is necessary that the kingship of our Savior be as widely as possible recognized and understood, and to that end, nothing would serve better than the institution of a special feast in honor of the Kingship of Christ." To recognize Christ's sovereignty over the universe is to recognize that the true, the good, and the beautiful are what all human beings naturally seek.

Now almost a hundred years later, his message is perhaps more relevant than ever. As Jesus emphasized in Matthew 6:24, "No man can serve two masters." We can either choose to be servants of the world, or we can choose to serve Christ, the King of the Universe, and be agents of His truth in the world.

Spiritual Reading

From Pope Francis' homily on the Solemnity of Christ the King in 2020:

"Each day, in our heart, we face many choices. I would like to give you one last piece of advice to help train you to choose well. If we look within ourselves, we can see two very different questions arising. One asks, 'What do I feel like doing?' This question often proves misleading, since it suggests that what really counts is thinking about ourselves and indulging in our wishes and impulses. The question that the Holy Spirit plants in our hearts is a very different one: not 'What do you feel like doing?' but 'What is best for you?' That is the choice we have to make daily: what do I feel like doing or what is best for me? This interior discernment can result either in frivolous choices or in decisions that shape our lives – it depends on us. Let us look to Jesus and ask him for the courage to choose what is best for us, to enable us to follow him in the way of love. And in this way to discover joy. To live, and not just get by."

Group Discussion Questions

- What stood out to you from the Gospel reading?
- What do you see as the greatest challenge to testifying to truth today?
- Who are the people in your life that model standing and speaking the truth in love?
- In what specific situations or circumstances can you focus on speaking the truth in love?
- Based on the excerpt from Pope Francis' homily, do you tend to make decisions based on what you feel like doing, or based on what is best for you?
- How might Pope Francis' words affect how you approach the daily decisions that you encounter?

Closing Prayer Suggestion

To conclude your time together in prayer, ask the group members if anyone has any intentions that they would like the group to pray for in the coming week. Then pray together the Prayer to Christ the King.

Prayer to Christ the King

Lord our God, You alone are the Most Holy King and Ruler of all nations.
We pray to You, Lord, in the great expectation of receiving from You,
O Divine King, mercy, peace, justice, and all good things.
Protect, O Lord our families and the land of our birth. Guard us, we pray, Most Faithful One.
Protect us from our enemies and from Your Just Judgment.
Forgive us, O Sovereign King, our sins against you. Jesus, You are the King of Mercy. We have deserved Your Just Judgment.
Have mercy on us, Lord, and forgive us. We trust in Your Great Mercy.
O most awe-inspiring King, we bow before You and pray;
May Your Reign, Your Kingdom, be recognized on earth.
Amen.

Live in the Word

In your prayer time this week, pray specifically for the intention of Christ's peace and justice to reign in our world.

Post-season Celebration

Season of Advent

Feast in Focus

This week serves primarily as a time of fellowship to conclude the season of small group meetings and enter into the season of Advent together. As such, it is up to your group to decide how you would like to use this week's content.

It would also be an option to plan a potluck meal for this meeting.

For an activity, consider providing supplies to make Advent wreathes together in preparation for the beginning of Advent. Catholic Culture offers a variety of options for making the different parts of the Advent wreath here, and Pinterest of course includes plenty of ideas for DIY Advent wreaths depending on the materials that you wish to use.

The included Closing Prayer is a Blessing of Advent wreathes, so you could also ask group members to bring their own Advent wreathes from home to be blessed.

Opening Prayer

Begin the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or pray together the following Advent Prayer:

Advent Prayer by Henri Nouwen

Lord Jesus,
Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.
We who have so much to do and seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day,
We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.
We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.
To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"
Amen.

Group Discussion Questions

- What has been your biggest takeaways from our time together this season?
- What will help you stay committed to spiritual reflection over the weeks until the next season of small group sessions begins?
- How can you continue to grow in Christian fellowship during the time until the next season of small group sessions begins?
- As we head into the Season of Advent, what are some ways that we can pray for one another?

Closing Prayer Suggestion

To conclude your time together, have join in the Blessing of the Advent Wreath:

Blessing of an Advent Wreath

From the USCCB

All make the sign of the cross as the leader says:

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R: Who made heaven and earth.

A reading from the Book of Isaiah:

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
Upon those who lived in a land of gloom
a light has shone.
You have brought them abundant joy*

*and great rejoicing;
They rejoice before you as people rejoice at harvest,
as they exult when dividing the spoils.*

*For a child is born to us, a son is given to us;
upon his shoulder dominion rests.*

*They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,
Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.*

*His dominion is vast
and forever peaceful,*

*Upon David's throne, and over his kingdom,
which he confirms and sustains*

*By judgment and justice,
both now and forever.*

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!

The Word of the Lord.

R: Thanks be to God.

With hands joined, the leader says:

Lord our God,

we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ:

he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples,

he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us,

he is the Savior of every nation.

Lord God,

let your blessing come upon us

as we light the candles of this wreath.

May the wreath and its light

be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation.

May he come quickly and not delay.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R: Amen.

The blessing may conclude with a verse from

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”:

O come, desire of nations, bind

in one the hearts of humankind;

bid ev'ry sad division cease

and be thyself our Prince of peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

shall come to thee, O Israel.



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