

DIOCESE OF DALLAS YOUNG ADULTS  
SMALL GROUP CONTENT





# WHY SMALL GROUPS?

Welcome to Season Nine, The Great Commison, of Young Adult Small Groups for the Diocese of Dallas! We are elated that you have opted to join us, during this Season, as we dive into the scriptures. We 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: help remind us of our call to discipleship, 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. She currently works in ministry marketing and communications, including video production for Catholic organizations. She is a proud native of Dallas and resides in the area with her husband and four kids.

## HOW TO USE THE SMALL GROUP CONTENT:

Each week has the same layout:

- Opening Prayer
- Weekly Scripture Readings
- Reflection
- Discipleship Focus
- Group Discussion Questions
- Closing Prayer

THERE IS LIKELY MORE CONTENT THAN YOU CAN COVER EACH WEEK, AND THIS ALLOWS YOUR GROUP THE FLEXIBILITY TO DECIDE WHICH CONTENT IS MOST BENEFICIAL TO USE.

## DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS:

The call to discipleship can be summarized by “The Great Commission” given by Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20:

“GO, THEREFORE, AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THAT I HAVE COMMANDED YOU. AND BEHOLD, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, UNTIL THE END OF THE AGE.”

To add to your small group discussions, each week of content includes a focus on a different aspect of discipleship from The Great Commission. There is also a recommended action for growing in that component of your walk with Christ.

# TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

## OPENING PRAYER

If this is your first time meeting as a small group, either ever or after a break, begin by having everyone briefly introduce themselves: name, school or job, family, interests/hobbies.

Open the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or you can use the prayer provided from the USCCB. >>

Then invite one member of the group to read aloud this Sunday's Gospel on page 5. As you listen, pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you from the reading.

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,  
PLEASEING YOU IN  
ALL THINGS, WE MAY  
GROW IN EVERY GOOD  
WORK. WE ASK THIS  
THROUGH CHRIST  
OUR LORD.  
AMEN.

## WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READINGS

Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14 | "So the LORD relented in the punishment he had threatened to inflict on his people."

Psalms 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19 | "I will rise and go to my father."

1 Timothy 1:12-17 | "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Of these I am the foremost."

**LUKE 15:1-32**  
READ ON PAGE 5 & 6

## LUKE 15:1-32

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

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

Then he said, "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."'"

So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with

compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began. Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns, who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.' He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'"

# REFLECTION

Many of us can recall a time in our lives when we acted out of character from who we truly are. Perhaps it was during a particular challenging phase of adolescence. Or maybe it was after going through a painful breakup of a relationship. Or it could have been when experiencing an unexpected or even unjust job loss. These times of trial can unfortunately lead us to lapse into poor moral decision-making, further compounding our pain and grief, and eventually causing us to lose our sense of who we are.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son takes a turn precisely because the younger son hits rock bottom. Only once he reaches the point of brokenness and despair does he “com[e] to his senses” (15:17) and decide to go to his father and say to him, “Father, I have sinned against

heaven and against you.” (15:21). St. Augustine described this turning point in the parable as the son bringing “back his mind to the inward recesses of his conscience.” In other words, the son finally examines his actions against the moral law that he knows to be true. His honest recognition of his offenses against both his heavenly Father and his earthly father enables him to seek forgiveness.

Whether we are currently experiencing a season of profound disorientation or not, this week’s Gospel serves as a reminder of the importance of a properly formed conscience. We cannot “come to our senses” and seek forgiveness for our offenses if we do not first have a strong inner foundation of God’s laws, and a conviction that they are ultimately designed for our good.

## DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS

### "GO" - OUR MISSION

A famous prayer attributed to St. Teresa of Avila reflects that “Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which He looks with compassion on the world. Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good.” We all have a mission to go out and reach others in our lives who need to hear or witness the works of God, to go outside the walls of the church that we worship in and introduce others to Him.

This week’s challenge is to invite someone to Mass with you. You can either choose to invite a friend who has never been to Mass before, or extend an invitation to someone who has fallen away from the practice of attending Mass regularly. Either way, a personal invitation to join you for Mass and coffee or a meal afterwards can be a starting point for sharing the Good News with another.

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- + What stood out to you from the Gospel reading?
- + Can you recall a time in your life when you lost your sense of who you truly are?
- + What helped you “come to your senses” and regain your sense of who God created you to be?
- + Are you generally able to recognize God’s laws as being designed for your good? Why or why not?
- + How would you describe your level of knowledge of the Catholic faith at this point in your life?
- + What are your initial thoughts on who you might invite to join you for Mass this week?



# TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

## OPENING PRAYER

Open the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or you can use the prayer provided from the USCCB. >>

Then invite one member of the group to read aloud this Sunday's Gospel on page 11. As you listen, pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you from the reading.

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.

## WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READINGS

Amos 8:4-7 | "The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Never will I forget a thing they have done!"

Psalms 113:1-2, 4-6, 7-8 | "Praise the Lord who lifts up the poor."

1 Timothy 2:1-8 | "This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth."

**LUKE 16:1-13**  
**READ ON PAGE 11**

## LUKE 16:1-13

Jesus said to his disciples, “A rich man had a steward who was reported to him for squandering his property. He summoned him and said, ‘What is this I hear about you? Prepare a full account of your stewardship, because you can no longer be my steward.’ The steward said to himself, ‘What shall I do, now that my master is taking the position of steward away from me? I am not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg. I know what I shall do so that, when I am removed from the stewardship, they may welcome me into their homes.’ He called in his master’s debtors one by one. To the first he said, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ He replied, ‘One hundred measures of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Here is your promissory note. Sit down and quickly write one for fifty.’ Then to another the steward said, ‘And you, how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘One hundred kors of wheat.’ The steward said to him, ‘Here is your promissory note; write one for eighty.’ And the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently. “For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones. If, therefore, you are not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, who will trust you with true wealth? If you are not trustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you what is yours? No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon.”

# REFLECTION

The Parable of the Dishonest Steward falls between Jesus' teachings on the Prodigal Son and the Rich Man and Lazarus; the parable acts as almost a bridge between the other two stories. There is a clear similarity between the steward's squandering away the wealth of his master and the prodigal son's lavish behavior. Likewise, the steward's misuse of money connects to the Rich Man's refusal to share with Lazarus in his time of need.

The clear teaching at the end of the parable is you cannot serve both God and mammon. The commentary in the New American Bible describes mammon as "the Greek transliteration of a Hebrew or Aramaic word usually explained as meaning 'that in which one trusts'... Mammon is used here as if it were itself a god."

Money can be described a neutral good; like most goods, the role that it plays in our lives ultimately determines its morality. A Christian approach to money requires at the most fundamental level that we do not value wealth as more important than God. Further, we are called to be good stewards of the wealth that we have been given, both for the sake of caring for those who are entrusted to us and in order to give generously to the poor.

To serve God above all ultimately stems from a recognition that all we have is a gift from God— it has been entrusted to us to use well during the time we are allowed here on earth, and we know that at the end of our lives we will be called to give an honest account of how we used what we were given.

## DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS

### "MAKE DISCIPLES" - RELATIONSHIP

Genesis 2:18 states that "It is not good for man to be alone." We were made to be in relationship with others, and this is why having a relationship with someone first is often necessary before we can introduce them to the God who loves them unconditionally. Receptivity to God can more easily stem from a sense of trust and feeling welcomed.

For this week's recommended action, bring a friend or loved one to Bible study or another parish ministry event. Be open to discussing any questions about the faith or the community that your friend may have after the event.

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ✦ What stood out to you from the Gospel reading?
- ✦ Other than money, what do you think are some of the most common goods that young adults tend to struggle with placing above God in their lives?
- ✦ How do you personally work to intentionally place God above all else in your life?
- ✦ Practically speaking, what sorts of attitudes and behaviors do you think are encompassed in an authentically Christian approach to money?
- ✦ How can you grow in your practice of stewardship during this particular season of your life?



# TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

## OPENING PRAYER

Open the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or you can use the prayer provided from the USCCB. >>

Then invite one member of the group to read aloud this Sunday's Gospel on page 16. As you listen, pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you from the reading.

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.

## WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READINGS

Amos 6:1a, 4-7 | "Thus says the LORD the God of hosts: Woe to the complacent in Zion!"

Psalms 146:7, 8-9, 9-10 | "Praise the Lord, my soul!"

1 Timothy 6:11-16 | "But you, man of God, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Compete well for the faith."

**LUKE 16:19-31**  
**READ ON PAGE 16**

## LUKE 16:19-31

Jesus said to the Pharisees: “There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.’ Abraham replied, ‘My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.’ He said, ‘Then I beg you, father, send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.’ But Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.’ He said, ‘Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ Then Abraham said, ‘If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.’”

# REFLECTION

During Jesus' time, very few people knew the Old Testament as well as the Pharisees did. And yet, the story that Jesus directs to them in this week's Gospel is a necessary correction to their refusal to recognize the numerous calls throughout the Old Testament to care for the poor and vulnerable. Despite being well-versed in the law and the Psalms, they still routinely refused to care for those outside of their own sect, effectively ignoring those lying at the gate.

It is perhaps part of our human nature to seek out and cling to those who are similar to us in some way, and to want to protect our own. But as God has revealed to us through Scripture, He has called each of us to care for the poorest and weakest among us. It is noteworthy that the rich man in Jesus' story was not

tormented simply because of his wealth, but rather for his refusal to care for Lazarus when he was in need.

The direct instruction from Jesus to all of us is to listen to and heed the teachings of Moses and the prophets on care for the poor during the finite time that we have on earth. In order to do so, I believe it is necessary to consider the reasons why we might be inclined to look away from or flat out ignore the poor among us. It is not an easy task to examine the underlying biases or fears that keep us from donating more of our money to those in need, advocating for social justice reform, or making an intentional effort to personally encounter the poor and vulnerable. Yet as Jesus' testimony in this week's Gospel clearly reveals, care for the poor is simply not an optional practice on the path to eternal life.

## DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS

### "OF ALL NATIONS" - INCLUSION

There are few places that I have ever been that have more diversity than the Catholic Church. Yet there are still so many who feel like they do not belong in the Church— people who have fallen away, or feel like whatever cross they bear is too great a burden for the Church to handle. But we know that God's desire is for all to be included in the Body of Christ, and part of the task of discipleship is to

personally work towards unity within the Church.

This week, offer to pray with someone who feels like the Church is not for them. Be genuine in your offer to pray for and with them in their concerns and struggles, and adopt a posture of compassionate listening and availability.

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ✦ What stood out to you from the Gospel reading?
- ✦ Are there parts of Scripture that you find more challenging to live by than others? If so, what examples come to mind?
- ✦ Do you find that you tend to seek out and care for those who are most similar to you? Or is it easy for you to be accepting of those who are different from you in some way?
- ✦ What do you find most challenging about Jesus' story in this week's Gospel?
- ✦ Which biases and fears do you think are often at the root of a refusal to care for the poor?
- ✦ What do you think is necessary to move beyond these biases and fears?



# TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

## OPENING PRAYER

Open the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or you can use the prayer provided from the USCCB. >>

Then invite one member of the group to read aloud this Sunday's Gospel on page 21. As you listen, pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you from the reading.

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.

## WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READINGS

Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4 | "How long, O LORD?  
I cry for help but you do not listen!"

Psalms 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9 | "If today you hear his  
voice, harden not your hearts."

2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14 | "...bear your share of  
hardship for the gospel with the strength  
that comes from God."

**LUKE 17:5-10**  
**READ ON PAGE 21**

## LUKE 17:5-10

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

"Who among you would say to your servant who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here immediately and take your place at table'? Would he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat. Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink. You may eat and drink when I am finished'? Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded? So should it be with you. When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'"

# REFLECTION

There is a 2015 Christian film entitled Little Boy that looks at the life of a young man named Pepper whose father is sent to fight in World War II. Pepper believes that if he prays hard enough, his father will return. There is a particularly significant scene in the film where Pepper's older brother does not believe prayer can return his father home, and when Pepper argues, his brother takes him by the arm, puts him in the middle of the road, and points at a giant mountain. The older brother then challenges Pepper to "see if your stupid faith can move that mountain." Pepper stands there, focused only on the mountain, while the whole town gathers around to watch him with his arms reaching towards the mountain. Adults gather and whisper while other children laugh at him. And then suddenly, the earth begins to rumble beneath their feet— an earthquake shakes the entire small town, splitting roads and destroying buildings, seemingly from the mountain moving. All the people stand in amazement.

The cynics in town then start to claim that it is a coincidence; they doubt that the boy did anything at all. A few think the boy is crazy or a magician. And yet some do begin to believe in the true power of faith.

This tendency to doubt is common for many of us— we hear about or even witness moments of faith, but then we question them: Was that God or just a coincidence? Did that person have an authentic encounter with God, or are they crazy?

Jesus teaches the apostles that faith has the power to make incredible things happen. And precisely because Jesus recognizes our human tendency to doubt or question, he asks us to humbly offer him even the smallest amount of faith that we can muster, and a willingness to let him increase this faith through his grace.

## DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS

### "BAPTIZING THEM" - PRAYER AND SACRAMENTS

You may have some Catholic friends who no longer regularly attend Mass, or unbaptized friends who have questions about the Catholic faith. Frequent reception of the Sacraments can be a powerful witness to their importance and value, and the graces that they offer to us.

This week, make an intentional effort to frequent the Sacraments yourself. Schedule a time to go to Confession, and make an effort to make it to daily Mass at least once.

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- + What stood out to you from the Gospel reading?
- + In the First Reading, Habukkuk cries out to God when he feels like God is not listening. Are you able to share with God in prayer your real struggles and frustrations? Why or why not?
- + Think of someone in your life who stands as clear model of faith for you, and explain why.
- + During what situations or circumstances do you struggle most to have faith in God's ways?
- + How have you seen evidence of the power of faith working in your own life?



# TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

## OPENING PRAYER

Open the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or you can use the prayer provided from the USCCB. >>

Then invite one member of the group to read aloud this Sunday's Gospel on page 26. As you listen, pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you from the reading.

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,  
PLEASEING YOU IN  
ALL THINGS, WE MAY  
GROW IN EVERY GOOD  
WORK. WE ASK THIS  
THROUGH CHRIST  
OUR LORD.  
AMEN.

## WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READINGS

2 Kings 5:14-17 | "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel."

Psalms 98:1, 2-3, 3-4 | "The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power."

2 Timothy 2:8-13 | "If we have died with him we shall also live with him; if we persevere we shall also reign with him."

**LUKE 17:11-19**  
**READ ON PAGE 26**

## LUKE 17:11-19

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

# REFLECTION

Very few things in the Bible seem as devastating of an ailment as leprosy. Throughout the book of Leviticus, there are numerous laws regarding how those suffering from the disease are no longer welcome in the community. The number of rituals and sacrifices they had to make to present themselves to the priests could take long enough for the ailment to claim their lives.

Jesus heals the lepers in this week's Gospel simply by hearing their cries for mercy and looking at them. Not only are the lepers witnesses to a miracle by the Messiah, but they themselves are the miracle. And yet, nine of those ten who were cured were completely ungrateful. They clearly knew who Jesus was, for they addressed him as "master." They knew he could heal them, and that he did so in an instant, and still they do not take the time to offer any thanks to him for giving them a second chance at life.

It is easy for me to assure myself that I would have been the one leper to stop and offer thanks to Jesus. But I once had someone challenge my gratefulness to God by asking me to consider: "What would you have left if you woke up in the morning with everything you thanked God for the day before?" I had to admit that at least on that particular day, I would have unfortunately been left with little. If you are anything like me, you tend to take for granted so many of God's blessings in life.

The good news is that Jesus still mercifully healed all ten of the lepers. Even when we forget to thank God for all the ways He has blessed us, He still continues to bless us. When we need healing and we cry out for mercy, he still heals us. God's mercy and goodness endure forever, offering us countless opportunities each day to give our humble thanks.

## DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS

### "TEACHING THEM" - GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE OF THE FAITH

"We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that."

This excerpt from the prayer "Prophets of a Future Not our Own" encompasses

our call to teach others about the faith. And in order to do so, we first must have for ourselves a deep knowledge and understanding of what the Church teaches.

This week, intentionally spend 10 minutes a day studying the teachings of the faith, either by reading the Catechism or listening to a podcast such as "The Bible in a Year" by Fr. Mike Schmitz.

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- + What stood out to you from the Gospel reading?
- + What do you think was at the heart of the nine lepers' lack of gratitude to Jesus?
- + On the other hand, what interior disposition was necessary for the one leper to have returned to Jesus?
- + How do you or can you intentionally cultivate gratitude to God?
- + And how do you or can you intentionally cultivate gratitude towards others in your life?



# TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

## OPENING PRAYER

Open the session by offering a brief prayer for the group. If you are comfortable, you can pray this spontaneously, or you can use the prayer provided from the USCCB. >>

Then invite one member of the group to read aloud this Sunday's Gospel on page 31. As you listen, pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you from the reading.

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,  
PLEASEING YOU IN  
ALL THINGS, WE MAY  
GROW IN EVERY GOOD  
WORK. WE ASK THIS  
THROUGH CHRIST  
OUR LORD.  
AMEN.

## WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READINGS

Exodus 17:8-13 | "As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight"

Psalms 121:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 | "Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

2 Timothy 3:14-4:2 | "...proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching."

**LUKE 18:1-8**  
**READ ON PAGE 30**

## LUKE 18:1-8

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

# REFLECTION

For several years, I was part of a Bible study group where we would end each gathering by sharing how we had experienced God's blessings throughout the week and also ask for any prayer requests from the group. No matter how distracted we may have gotten during the meetings just catching up with each other on the craziness of life, this opportunity to share and pray together was always a constant.

One of the members of group consistently prayed for the same thing every single week: that her parents would come back to Mass. Her family had raised her Catholic, but they had fallen away from the church after the unexpected loss of a family member. It was devastating for her, but nothing she said to them could convince them to come back. Over the years, they missed several significant Sacramental moments in the lives of their loved ones and extended family due to their unwillingness to return to the faith. And yet, without fail, every single week, my friend's prayer was the same. Despite

ups and downs and changes in her own personal life, every time that we met together for nearly three years, she never prayed for anything else. I admit that as time went on, I questioned to myself how she was able to continue the same prayer when the situation seemed hopeless.

And then one week, her prayer was different. She said her blessings, and then her intercession was simply for something totally different. This change was so shocking that as soon as we were done, I asked her if everything was okay. She teared up and said that her parents had gone to Mass on Sunday. It was amazing to see the joy on her face, and just as amazing for the rest of us in the group to see how her prayers had finally been answered.

Her family now regularly attends daily Mass. Her patience and perseverance in prayer, much like the widow in this week's Gospel, will forever remain for me a clear witness to the power of remaining steadfast in prayer.

## DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS

### "WITH YOU ALWAYS" - COMMUNITY AND ACCOMPANIMENT

True discipleship will only take place when those you hope to help start to become part of your community. We need to work on the continued graces of being part of a larger community and to let others be a part of that community group. And then one day, they too can start to lead others in their faith journeys.

This week, invite someone new to be a part of your small group and accompany them on their faith journey, asking them weekly how you can pray for them over the next few weeks and specifically through the upcoming holiday season.

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ✦ What stood out to you from the Gospel reading?
- ✦ In the First Reading, Moses was supported by Aaron. Who are the people in your life who support you in discipleship?
- ✦ What do you think are the most important ways to support one another as a Christian community?
- ✦ The Gospel instructs us to pray “without growing weary.” How do you persevere in prayer when it seemingly goes unanswered?
- ✦ Do you find it is easier to persevere in prayer for yourself, or for others, and why?



# APPENDIX

## PRAYER TO TURN FROM SIN

Father, your love never fails.

Keep me from danger and provide for all my needs.

Teach me to be thankful for your gifts.

Confident in your love, may I be holy by sharing your life,  
and grant me forgiveness of my sins.

May your unfailing love turn me from sin  
and keep me on the way that leads to you.

Help me to grow in Christian love.

Amen.

## PRAYER TO LOVE GOD ABOVE ALL THINGS

God, my Father,

may I love you in all things and above all things.

May I reach the joy which you have prepared for me in heaven.

Nothing is good that is against your Will,  
and all that is good comes from your Hand.

Place in my heart a desire to please you  
and fill my mind with thoughts of your Love,  
so that I may grow in your wisdom and enjoy your peace.

Amen.

## PRAYER FOR THE POOR

God of Justice, open our eyes to see you in the face of the poor.

Open our ears to hear you in the cries of the exploited.

Open our mouths to defend you in the public squares  
as well as in private deeds.

Remind us that what we do to the least ones, we do to you.

Amen.

## PRAYER TO MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH AND MOTHER OF OUR FAITH

Mother, help our faith!

Open our ears to hear God's word and to recognize his voice and call.

Awaken in us a desire to follow in his footsteps, to go forth from our own  
land and to receive his promise.

Help us to be touched by his love, that we may touch him in faith.

Help us to entrust ourselves fully to him and to believe in his love,  
especially at times of trial, beneath the shadow of the cross, when our  
faith is called to mature.

Sow in our faith the joy of the Risen One.

Remind us that those who believe are never alone.

Teach us to see all things with the eyes of Jesus, that he may be light  
for our path. And may this light of faith always increase in us, until the  
dawn of that undying day which is Christ himself, your Son, our Lord!

Amen.

# PRAYER FROM A NOVENA FOR GRATITUDE

Lord God, we do not always remember to thank You  
as we ought for all You have done for us and given us.

We praise You for Your goodness and offer our prayers of thanksgiving  
to You today for all You have done for us and given us.

You did not have to create man or any of creation.

Out of Your goodness, You chose to create the world  
and to make man in Your own image.

You have given each of us life in order that we might know, love, and  
serve You.

We thank You for all of Your blessings,  
and we particularly thank You today for giving us life!

Help us to grow in gratitude each day, in every circumstance.

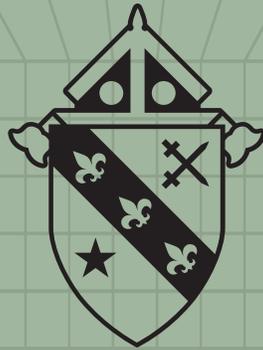
Help us to grow closer to You each day of our lives.

Amen.

# PRAYER OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

Grant me, O Lord my God,  
a mind to know you,  
a heart to seek you,  
wisdom to find you,  
conduct pleasing to you,  
faithful perseverance in waiting for you  
and a hope of finally embracing you.

Amen.



**YOUTH, YOUNG ADULT,  
& CAMPUS MINISTRIES**  
— DIOCESE OF DALLAS —

CATHOLICDALLAS.ORG