

SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

June 16, 2019 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *God of all ages, you are loving, slow to anger, rich in kindness. We praise you for your goodness. You are the Creator and sustainer of our lives. You are our Savior. We honor you for your total gift of self. You are the Spirit of life, forgiveness, and peace. We delight in your tender love. One God in three persons, be near to us who are formed in your image. Dwell in us. We ask this, gracious God, living and true, forever and ever. Amen.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator: The Feast of Pentecost completed the Lent-Easter season. We resume Ordinary Time the day after Pentecost. The *Sundays* in this part of Ordinary Time begin with two Solemnities, namely, the Most Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi. During the *Fifty Days of Easter*, we celebrated what God *did* for us through Jesus. This Sunday on the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, we celebrate *who* God is for us. The first reading speaks of Lady Wisdom's role in creation. The second reading and the Gospel are chosen because both readings mention all three persons of the Holy Trinity.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Proverbs 8:22-31

We are introduced to the mysterious figure of Lady Wisdom. In the first verses of today's reading, Lady Wisdom tells us that she was God's first-born, existing long before anything else was brought forth. Then, in poetic detail, Lady Wisdom tells us how she was present with God as a kind of craftsman when the world was being created. The reading ends with an intriguing image of Lady Wisdom playing on the surface of the earth, taking delight in human beings. Lady Wisdom should not be seen as separate from God. Neither should she be seen as the feminine side of God. (Being pure spirit, God is neither male nor female.) In the Christian era, Wisdom was seen as the Word of God, which became flesh in Christ.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 8

This hymn of praise contrasts God's majesty with human lowliness, and marvels at God's treatment of humankind. The author especially marvels at God's concern for us inferior human creatures.

SECOND READING: Romans 5:1-5

The *saving work* of Jesus is a major theme of Paul's letter to the Romans. We are saved by grace. It is pure

gift. We do not earn it. Rather, we open our hearts to the gift and receive it. This "opening of our hearts" to Jesus is one way to describe what we call 'faith.' By opening our hearts to God in faith, we "gain access" to God who is our peace, hope and end. Because of our relationship with God, we can endure afflictions. Coping with afflictions leads to endurance, and endurance leads to *tested virtue* and *hope*, which keeps us going in difficult times.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: John 16:12-15

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

**A participant reads the Gospel again,
then all pause to reflect.**

GOSPEL: John 16:12-15

Today's Gospel is an excerpt from Jesus' *Farewell Discourse* to his Apostles. They are downcast because of his departure. To console and help them, Jesus promises to send his Holy Spirit. One of the roles of the Spirit is to lead the disciples into "all truth." The Spirit will lead the Church to gradually understand the deep meaning and radical implications of the teachings of Jesus. Often the teachers of our Church use this text when speaking about some of our teachings that are not *explicitly* mentioned in Scripture—beliefs about Mary, purgatory, and original sin. Through centuries of meditation on the Scriptures, Mother Church, led by the Spirit, came to believe that the above teachings were *implied* in the Scriptures. Another role of the Holy Spirit is to help the Church in every age to express, in fresh contemporary language, ancient truths.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what word/s or image/s in the readings caught your attention? Did they comfort, challenge, or touch you in some way?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. The first reading speaks about Lady Wisdom being playful, creative and appreciative of beauty. To what extent are you like Lady Wisdom? Where do you see beauty in life?

3. What is one of your favorite images of God? Why?

4. To what extent is your spirituality Trinitarian? Do you pray to one person of the Blessed Trinity more than you pray to the others? Do you have a relationship with all three persons of the Trinity?

5. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

JOURNALING. *Having listened to God's Word and to others' reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestion: If you tend to omit praying to one of the Persons of the Trinity, begin this week to pray to that person.

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

FACILITATOR: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: "*Father, Son and Holy Spirit, lead me into a deeper sense of the great mystery that you are; lead me into your Trinitarian life.*"

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

*O Most Holy Trinity, undivided Unity,
when we try to understand you,
it can make our head spin.
Deepen our relationship with you,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Fill us with your delight
and help us pour your love out
into a world so in need of that love.
Amen.*

THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

June 23, 2019 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Loving and nourishing God, we gather together to contemplate the great gift of the Holy Eucharist. Open our eyes to the holy presence of Jesus in our midst and in our Eucharistic celebrations. Open our minds and hearts to the message you wish to convey to us in the Scriptures we are about to share. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator: Three meals are remembered in today's readings. The first is probably a cultic, sacrificial meal offered by Melchizedek, a priest and the king of Salem. The second reading is St. Paul's description of "what had been handed on to him from the Lord," namely, the words and actions of the Last Supper. The third is the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fish. Today's solemnity gives us the opportunity to see the many facets of our weekly celebration of the Eucharist. We remember the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. We remember that Jesus Christ is present under the forms of bread and wine—real food and drink for our journey. And here we experience a multiplication of grace and mercy as we humbly offer ourselves to God. Let us pray this week for a greater appreciation and love for the Body and Blood of Christ.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Genesis 14:18-20

Melchizedek, King of Salem (early name for Jerusalem) comes to greet Abraham who is returning from a victorious battle. Melchizedek, who is also a priest, blesses Abraham with bread and wine. In early Christian tradition, the bread and wine are taken to prefigure the bread and wine of the Eucharist. Melchizedek, a man of unknown origins, is also seen to prefigure Christ. Just as the bread and wine celebrate Abraham's victory over his enemies and his reunion with his brother Lot, so does our Eucharistic sacrifice celebrate Jesus' victory over death, evil and sin, and enable us to remember our union with Jesus. In a response, Abraham gives Melchizedek a *tithe* of all he had. This is one of the first references to tithing in the Bible.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 110:1-4

This is a royal psalm extolling the Davidic kingship. It may have been addressed to a king on the day of his coronation by a court singer.

SECOND READING: 1Corinthians 11:23-26

This is the most ancient text we have on the origin of the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ. Since Paul was not

present at the Last Supper, he is passing on what he himself received. Jesus *takes* bread, *blesses* it, *breaks* it and *gives* it to his disciples. When he does this, Jesus identifies himself with the bread and wine. "*This is my Body...my Blood...broken and poured out for you,*" i.e., Jesus' life is broken and poured out for the salvation of all people.

"*Do this in remembrance of me*"—do what I have done. In doing so, we are proclaiming and making present Jesus, our Redeemer. "*Do this...*" also calls us to live the meaning of the Eucharist. Like Jesus, we must be ready to lay down our lives for one another, thereby participating in the dying and rising of Christ.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 9:11-17

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

**A participant reads the Gospel again,
then all pause to reflect.**

GOSPEL: Luke 9:11-17

This is the only miracle story recorded in all four Gospels. Jesus is out in the desert with a large crowd of people, teaching them about the reign of God and healing their sick. As evening draws near, the Twelve suggest that the people be dismissed so that they can go to the local villages for food and shelter. But Jesus challenges the Twelve to provide food. Then Jesus tells the Twelve to break the large crowd into small groups. Jesus *takes* the bread, *blesses* it, *breaks* it and *gives* it to his disciples to share. Jesus' action has clear Eucharistic overtones. At the Last Supper, he will also *take*, *bless*, *break* and *give* bread to the Twelve.

"*All are satisfied*" and there are 12 baskets left over. These simple words give us the meaning of this event, namely, that Jesus is the bread that satisfies our soul-hungers and he is the One who blesses us with abundance. The story also tells us that when we offer Jesus the little we have, he will bless and multiply it and use it to bless and nourish others.

"*Give them something to eat yourselves*" is a challenge to the Church to feed the physical and soul-hungers of people.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what word/s or image/s in the readings caught your attention? Did they comfort, challenge, or touch you in some way?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. In your faith journey, have you had a spiritual, awakening moment regarding the Eucharist that helped you appreciate Mass more than you had in previous years?

3. In your opinion, why have so many Catholics lost faith in the Eucharist? What can you do to help draw them back to the parish and the Lord's Table?

4. What helps or hinders you from being fully engaged in the celebration of the Eucharist?

5. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

JOURNALING. *Having listened to God's Word and to others' reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect*

on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestions: Read an article that may help you to grow in your appreciation of the Eucharist. Be more conscious that in sharing your life with others, you are being Eucharist for them.

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

FACILITATOR: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *Jesus, open the eyes of my soul to see more deeply your presence in the Eucharist.*

**CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING,
PETITION AND INTERCESSION**

Facilitator: Let us now conclude with prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray?

Pray for all who no longer come to the Eucharist. Pray that each of us may learn to connect the Eucharist more and more with our everyday lives.

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

Soul of Christ

*Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, heal me.
Blood of Christ, drench me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O Good Jesus, hear me.
In your wounds, shelter me.
From turning away, keep me.
From the evil one, protect me.
At the hour of my death, call me.
Into your presence, lead me,
to praise you with all your saints
For ever and ever. Amen.*

- St. Ignatius of Loyola

Catechism link. For my article on the Eucharist, visit our website www.ascensioncatholic.net (Go to Fr. Tobin's Writings, click on Catholic Catechism Topics, then scroll down to Lesson 14, *Eucharist: Source & Summit of the Christian Life.*)

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

June 30, 2019 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Jesus, in today's Gospel you begin your journey to Jerusalem where death awaits you. Give us the courage to follow you and trust you in all things. May your Holy Spirit be with us as we share life and your Word. Amen.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator: The words *journey, commitment, and discipleship* sum up the message of today's readings. In the first reading, Elijah says goodbye to family and former way of life to embark on a new journey of commitment and discipleship to God. In the Gospel, Jesus 'resolutely' sets out on a journey to Jerusalem where he will pay the ultimate price for his fidelity to his Father. Along the way, he tells prospective disciples the 'cost' they will pay for following him. The second reading points to a journey from "living in the flesh" to "living in the spirit."

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: 1Kings 19:16, 19-21

This is a story of prophetic succession. It is done not only by *spoken word*, but also by *symbolic action*, i.e., passing of the mantle which represents the handing down of prophetic authority from Elijah to Elisha. Elisha is very willing to respond to his call, but first asks if he can bid farewell to his parents. Elijah's harsh remark is no harsher than Jesus' in today's Gospel. The killing of the oxen is a symbolic action by which Elisha makes a total break from his former life as a farmer. But before Elisha becomes a full-fledged, independent prophet, he must first serve as Elijah's attendant.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 16

The exclusive character of the prophet's love for God fits well with today's responsorial psalm.

SECOND READING: Galatians 5:1, 13-18

Paul speaks about Christian freedom. Through baptism and the grace of Christ, Christians have been freed from the tyranny of the law and from enslavement to sin. But freedom is both a gift and a daily challenge. God graces us with true freedom to serve him in love, but if we do not cooperate with his grace, we will fall back again into the "yoke of slavery."

Christian freedom is not a license to do what we want—especially not a license to follow every urging of the flesh. Rather, Christian freedom calls us to be free to serve others in love. For the Galatians to be "biting and devouring each other" is very contrary to what their baptism and Christian freedom call them to do.

Paul exhorts his readers to live by the spirit and not by the flesh. Paul's intention here is not to set up a false opposition between our physical and spiritual selves. For Paul, the 'flesh' is that part of us which has not yet surrendered to God, the part of us that is inclined towards selfish and sinful ways. The 'spirit,' on the other hand, is that part of us that seeks to follow God's promptings. If we submit to the Holy Spirit, he will help us to resist the inclinations of the flesh and embrace the ways of Jesus.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 9:51-62

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

**A participant reads the Gospel again,
then all pause to reflect.**

GOSPEL: Luke 9:51-62

Jesus begins a journey to Jerusalem where he will face death. As Jesus travels, three prospective disciples tell him that they would like to join him. Instead of expressing happiness, Jesus tells his prospective recruits to think hard about their choice and what it may cost them.

Scholars tell us that Jesus is *not saying what he seems to be saying*, namely, that prospective followers must be ready to adopt a homeless lifestyle, that they should not be preoccupied with burying their dead or maintaining family ties. After all, Jesus' family did have a home in Nazareth. We can also assume that Jesus reverently buried Joseph. Respectful burial of the dead is an important part of Jewish piety (Tobit 4:3). And we can assume that Jesus enjoyed family gatherings. So what is Jesus saying?

Jesus wants to impart to us that prospective disciples must be ready to put him first before family, home, and anything else. Jesus must have first place in the life of a disciple. If, for some reason, a family member tries to get in the way of a disciple's commitment to Jesus, the disciple must opt for Jesus. Allegiance to Christ is even more important than allegiance to one's spouse. Jesus is not dismissing the love and commitment spouses must have for one another but that it should not be above one's allegiance to Christ. To do so would make oneself unfit for the Kingdom of God.

"Attachment to the plow" involves a healthy detachment from everyone and everything. We should never become so attached to a person, job or thing that it threatens our attachment to Jesus. Everyone and everything else must be seen in the context of our first and foremost commitment to Jesus. How will marrying this person impact my relationship with Jesus? Will it help or hurt it? How will taking this job impact my relationship with Jesus? Will it help it or hurt it? Those are the kinds of questions athletes bent on becoming a superstar ask. How will such-and-such a decision impact my number one goal?

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what word/s or image/s in the readings caught your attention? Did they comfort, challenge, or touch you in some way?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. In our first reading, we have the "passing of the mantle" of prophetic leadership from Elijah to Elisha. Can you name an experience from your family, work or Church life when this happened to you? What was that experience like for you?

3. "Curbing the cravings of the flesh" can be a big challenge in a society that is so self-indulgent. Is there a craving of the flesh that is a big challenge for you? If so, what helps you to curb this craving?

4. Today, Luke begins what is often called his "journey narrative" (9:51-18:14): Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Can you share an event or time when your life took a new direction. What were the consequences of that choice or new direction?

5. How can or how does your commitment to family sometimes get in the way of your commitment to Jesus and the Church?

6. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

JOURNALING. *Having listened to God's Word and to others' reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestions: Take time to reflect on the journey of your life. Where is it going? Are you peaceful with its present direction? Would you like your life to go in a different direction? If so, name one thing you can do to move in the new direction.

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

Facilitator: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *Jesus, I want to totally surrender and be committed to you. But sometimes I find it hard to put my love of you, above my love for other people and things. Please grant me the grace to make you and your Word the most important thing in my life.*

**CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING,
PETITION AND INTERCESSION**

FACILITATOR: Let us now conclude with prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray?

Pray for new disciples of Christ—that they may have people to teach them by word and example.

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

*Lord God,
We sometimes put the words,
“I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back”
on our lips.
When I am tempted to turn back,
remind me of the blessings
I have gained by following you, Lord.
Then fill me with an even greater determination
to live under the guidance of your Holy Spirit
each and every day.
Amen.*

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

July 7, 2019 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Caring God, in our first reading today you are imaged as a caring mother comforting her children. As we gather today to share your Word, may we experience your motherly care for us. This we pray through Christ the Lord of the Harvest. Amen.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator: Our first reading celebrated Israel's return home from exile. In the second reading, Paul shares with us how he bears the marks of Christ on his body. In the Gospel, Jesus commissions the 72 disciples to go forth and share the Good News he has come to bring. A spirit of joy pervades all three readings.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 66:10-14

This reading is a part of a larger poem which announces the return of the Israelites from the Babylonian exile. It proclaims the end of a time of suffering and the beginning of a new era of peace for Jerusalem and her inhabitants: "*Rejoice with Jerusalem!*" Isaiah uses the image of motherhood to characterize the relationship that will exist between Jerusalem and her people, as well as the loving care that this relationship will provide. Like a nurturing mother, Jerusalem will give of herself, feeding her inhabitants from the fullness of her body. The very city for which they had previously mourned will now comfort her children. The reading foreshadows the blessings that will result from the coming of the Kingdom of God with Jesus.

Then the author uses the image of motherhood to speak about God's tender care for all who live in Jerusalem. Some of us today who are accustomed to only thinking of God in male images may find the motherly image of God surprising if not shocking.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 66

The strong joyous spirit of this psalm echoes the joy found in all three readings this Sunday.

SECOND READING: Galatians 6:14-18

This reading contains the closing verses of Paul's Letter to the Galatians. Some of Paul's audience, the

Judaizers (who try to impose Jewish customs on Gentile Christians) boast of circumcision as a sign of their favor with God. For Paul, circumcision means nothing. What matters is the Cross of Christ and the new life it makes available to him. For Paul to boast of the Cross of Christ is amazing when we realize how crucifixion is regarded in his time. It is a degrading death reserved for slaves, violent criminals and political rebels. Who would want to boast of this kind of death? Paul also refers to how his commitment to Christ has led him to share in the sufferings of Christ. The "marks of Jesus" on his body is most likely a reference to the many beatings he received.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 10:1-2, 17-20

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

**A participant reads the Gospel again,
then all pause to reflect.**

GOSPEL: Luke 10:1-2, 17-20

Jesus commissions 72 disciples in pairs to share the Good News to all who are ready to listen. (72 represented all the nations of the world; hence, their mission was to *all* people.) Before they depart, Jesus warns them that they will not be received warmly (“*lambs among wolves*”). He also tells them to travel lightly and to trust him. The urgency of the mission is underlined by the words: “*Greet no one on the way.*” Jesus is telling them not to waste time with social niceties nor bother looking for suitable lodgings. Accept whatever is offered. If people open their hearts to you, accept their offer of hospitality. Cure the sick, cast out demons. If people close their hearts to you, do not waste time arguing with them. Move on to the next town. The Master is in charge.

The reading ends with the return of the 72 disciples and their stories of success. Jesus places their experiences in their true context. As impressive as the wondrous deeds they have witnessed, even more wondrous is the fact that their names have been inscribed in the heavenly book (Exodus 32:32).

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what word/s or image/s in the readings caught your attention? Did they comfort, challenge, or touch you in some way?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. How does the image of God as a mother appeal to you? Do feminine images of God disturb or help your relationship with God?

3. In the second reading, Paul talks boastfully about the Cross of Christ which gained him salvation. Can you name one time, past or present, when carrying a particular cross helped you to grow spiritually?

4. Pope Francis tells us that Catholics are called by Baptism to be “missionary disciples” for Christ. How do you act on this call? Or how can you act on it?

5. Name one thing today’s Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

JOURNALING. *Having listened to God’s Word and to others’ reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your*

response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week’s readings. Suggestions: Pray for all who have been forced to leave their homeland. Pray for opportunities to be a ‘missionary disciple’ of Jesus.

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

FACILITATOR: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: “*Jesus, help me to overcome any fear that I may have of being a zealous missionary for you in my home, neighborhood and workplace.*”

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Facilitator: Let us now conclude with prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray?

Pray for all missionaries at home and abroad. Pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Pray for America.

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

*Almighty God,
You feed us with signs of new life
each and every day.
Give us eyes to see you present in our midst.
Give us arms to carry you into our world.
Give us mouths that drink fully
of the milk of your comfort,
so that we might make your kingdom visible now.
Amen.*

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

July 14, 2019 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Loving God, we gather once again to share life in the context of your holy Word. Today, you tell us that your Word is very near to us, in our mouths and in our hearts. Reveal to us the word you want us to hear this day. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator: In the first reading, Moses reminds the Israelites that the law of God is “*already in your mouths and in your hearts.*” The truth is echoed by the lawyer in the Gospel who readily quotes the law. Jesus, echoing Moses, urges the lawyer to do what he already knows. The compassionate action of the Good Samaritan reveals to us the “image of the invisible God” which Paul speaks about in the second reading.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Deuteronomy 30:10-14

This is an excerpt from Moses' farewell speech to the Israelites in which he instructs them about the *importance* of the law and its accessibility. He exhorts them to commit themselves to the Lord by observing his commandments. Previously, these commandments were considered as *external* to them; now they are presented as springing from within themselves. They are written in the people's hearts and not far away from them. They can be understood by anyone who is open to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 69

Confidence in God in the midst of adversity is the principal message in this psalm of lament.

SECOND READING: Colossians 1:15-20

This is the first of four readings from Colossians that we will listen to in the coming Sundays. It is an excerpt from an early Christian hymn which focuses on the *divine nature* and prerogatives of the risen Christ, rather than on his humanity. These verses underscore the cosmic role, superiority and significance of Christ. *Christ is the icon or visible presence of God in our midst.* As the wisdom of God present at the creation of the world, Christ is God's “blueprint plan” as ordered. All things are made

through him and for him. All things are designed to be in him. Christ is also Head of the Church. Despite the lofty images Paul uses to speak of Christ, he ends by grounding them in the historical reality of Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross, the redemptive event that stands at the heart of his Lordship over all creation.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 10:25-37

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

**A participant reads the Gospel again,
then all pause to reflect.**

GOSPEL: Luke 10:25-37

In this well-known parable, a scholar of the law seeks to embarrass Jesus by challenging his knowledge of the law. Jesus turns the lawyer's challenge back on him by asking him to answer his own question. Jesus answers the lawyer's second question—“*Who is my*

neighbor?”—by telling a parable that affirms that one’s neighbor is any person in need—irrespective of class, race, color or creed.

We should note that the priest and the Levite in the story are not the cold-hearted people that they are often made out to be. If they touched what seemed like a dead corpse, they would have incurred ritual defilement and thus be unable to carry on their duties at the Temple. Then comes a Samaritan, a half-cast and despised by Jews. But this supposedly good-for-nothing fellow is moved by great compassion for the man who is almost dead. He treats him with great care and tenderness and pays for his care at the local inn. The lawyer who tried to trick Jesus is now forced to recognize that his enemy is the one who showed love for the person in need. Jesus ends by exhorting all to “go and do likewise.” Christianity is not a spectator’s sport; it is a call to compassionate action.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what word/s or image/s in the readings caught your attention? Did they comfort, challenge, or touch you in some way?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. In the first reading, we are told that the Word of God is not external to us; rather it is in our hearts. What is *your* experience? Do you generally tend to think of God’s Word as external to you, or do you often experience it as present in your heart?

3. As we look at the behavior of the Good Samaritan, what can we learn from him about how to respond to a person in need?

4. Has there been a time when you have walked by? What should you have done differently?

5. Name one good samaritan you know. What makes the person a good samaritan?

6. Name one thing today’s Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

JOURNALING. *Having listened to God’s Word and to others’ reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your*

response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week’s readings. Suggestions: Observe yourself this week and see to what extent you treat others with compassion. See if there are certain types of individuals or groups that you exclude from your circle of love.

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

FACILITATOR: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *“Jesus, in your Word today, you tell us everyone in need is my neighbor. Help me to remember this especially when I am tempted to turn away from those I usually tend to turn away from.”*

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Facilitator: Let us now conclude with prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray?

Especially pray for hospice workers and all who work with the needy, sick and homebound.

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

*Your words are Spirit and life, O God.
Help me do more than memorize or recite
your commands and the teachings of Jesus.
Help me to meditate on them
and find them deep within me,
so that I can think with your mind
and love with your heart
and help others know your mercy.
Amen.*

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

July 21, 2019 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Thank you, Lord, for gathering us together to share life in the context of listening to your Word. Help us to grow in the grace and ministry of hospitality. Help us to listen well to your Word and to always be ready to extend hospitality especially to the stranger and to the person in need.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator: The first and third readings are two beautiful stories about hospitality shown to divine persons. In the second reading, Paul speaks of his mission to the Gentiles and how his sufferings in some way supplement those of Christ.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Genesis 18:1-10

In this classic-like story from the ancient Near East, heavenly beings come in disguise to a humble home, receiving hospitality from those living there and rewarding the family with the announcement of the future birth of a child. The author(s) of Genesis made use of this form of storytelling to show how God intended to be faithful to his promise of a child to Abraham, whose name means "father of a multitude of nations."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 15

Those who live virtuously with others are the ones who are worthy to stand in the presence of God.

SECOND READING: Colossians 1:24-28

Paul speaks about his sufferings and his ministry to the Gentiles. His reference to how his sufferings make up for "what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ" has been the subject of much discussion. Obviously, Paul is *not* saying what he *seems* to be saying, namely, that there is something lacking in the saving act of Christ, which is totally complete. Commenting on the statement of Paul, Patricia Sanchez writes: "*While the saving work of Jesus was complete, his campaign against sin is still being waged in and through the members of his Body, the Church.*" Paul is rejoicing for his share in this campaign. His sufferings on behalf of the Body of Christ help to extend the boundaries of the Church.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 10:38-42

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

**A participant reads the Gospel again,
then all pause to reflect.**

GOSPEL: Luke 10:38-42

Scholars like to point out the placement of this story in Luke's Gospel. It comes immediately on the heels of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which highlights the "action-dimension" of the Christian life. This story is intended to balance that by highlighting the "contemplative dimension." The story is *not* intended to be a put-down on Martha and her attention to the practical details of hospitality. Without the Marthas of this world, Jesus may not have gotten anything to eat, and the dirty dishes would have all piled up in the kitchen. Having said that, Martha needs to learn that even more important than the practical details of hospitality, is sitting at the feet of Jesus to listen to his words. The "better part" is to be devoted to Christ

above all things and to be his faithful disciple, which in reality will involve both *listening* to Jesus and *acting* on his Word. In the Christian life, we are called to integrate the *active* and *contemplative* dimensions of our spirituality. We go from prayer to action and from action to prayer, and hope that our action will also be a prayer. We need to integrate the Martha and Mary dimensions of our Christian life.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what word/s or image/s in the readings caught your attention? Did they comfort, challenge, or touch you in some way?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. How would you rate your parish when it comes to hospitality? How are newcomers welcomed and helped to integrate into the parish? How could your parish be more hospitable? Do let your Pastor know. (If your Pastor is in Ireland, maybe wait until he returns. 😊)

3. When you have a problem with someone (Martha) do you tend to speak to that person yourself or do you tend to complain about the person to someone else?

4. Do you tend to be more like Martha or Mary? How can you integrate prayer with action?

5. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

JOURNALING. *Having listened to God's Word and to others' reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestions: Draw up a list of ways that the ministry of hospitality could be improved in your parish. Offer them to your pastor and hospitality ministry. This week, observe how well you integrate prayer with action.

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

FACILITATOR: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *"Jesus, in today's Gospel, we find Mary sitting at your feet listening to your word. Help me to make this a priority in my life."*

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Facilitator: Let us now conclude with prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray?

Pray for the grace to see God in the strangers you meet and to integrate prayer with action.

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

*Generous God,
You invite all people into your tent
and welcome us with open arms.
Whether we sit at the feet of your Son, Jesus,
or are busy baking, cooking, and cleaning,
make us aware of the ways in which
our daily lives can welcome others
and accept the welcome they offer to us.
Amen.*

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

July 28, 2019 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Father in heaven, Lord of the earth, we humbly place ourselves in your holy presence. In our readings today you teach us about prayer. Help us to be good students and help us especially to pray well. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator: Our first reading is a concrete example of a person persevering intercessory prayer, which Jesus speaks about in the Gospel. Both readings also speak about the justice and mercy of God. The second reading is a baptismal instruction in which Paul describes the effects of the Resurrection of Christ in the lives of believers.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: GENESIS 18:20-32

This week's first reading picks up where last week's reading left off. After the departure of the mysterious strangers from his tent, Abraham finds himself walking with the Lord, bargaining over the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. The reading is a wonderful example of how to be humble before God *and*, at the same time, assertive and courageous. Also notice how approachable God is in the story. Even though one could see from the reading a wonderful example of one person persevering in prayer (as Jesus exhorts us to do in the Gospel), the reading is more about the *nature of divine justice*. A central question in the conversation between God and Abraham is: *Should not the judge of all the world act with justice?* The answer is obvious. Of course, he should. In the reading, Abraham questions God six times about the parameters of divine justice, and six times God appears to adjust them. The sacred worth of the few is upheld. For the sake of a few innocent people, God is willing to spare the city. (If we read on further, we will find that the city is destroyed because no innocent people could be found.)

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 138

This is a psalm of gratitude to God who has given hope to a people feeling lost and abandoned.

SECOND READING: Colossians 2:12-14

Paul shares with us the awesome effects of baptism in the life of the believer. Prior to baptism, the believer is spiritually dead due to sin. In and through the Cross, Jesus cancels our debt of sin. He wipes it out. In the waters of Baptism, believers share in this redeeming work of Christ. Jesus, as it were, takes us down into the tomb of death, washing us totally of sin, and raises us up to new life in him. In Baptism, we become a new creation. The debt owed to God is completely wiped out. In response, we would hopefully desire to struggle daily to remain clean, free, forgiven and faithful.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 11:1-13

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

**A participant reads the Gospel again,
then all pause to reflect.**

GOSPEL: Luke 11:1-13

Jesus responds to his disciple's request for instructions on prayer: "Lord, teach us to pray." We can first note that Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer is shorter than Matthew's ('Protestant' version to which is added the words: "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever.") Following is a brief comment on each part of the Lord's Prayer that books have been written on:

"*Our Father.*" The prayer is primarily intended to be a community prayer (versus a private one). Notice Jesus says 'Our' Father, and not 'My' Father. Because God is *our* Father, all of us are not only his sons and daughters but also brothers and sisters.

"*Father.*" Scholars love to point out that the word Jesus used for "Father" is more accurately translated "dada" or "pop." This is very important because it tells us that Jesus wants us to share the same close intimacy with his Father that he shared. Ideally, we should approach God with the confidence of a child or with the confidence of Abraham in the first reading.

"*Hallowed be your Name.*" In the Hebrew mind, a person's name stood for his whole character and being. Thus, when we say: "Hallowed be your name," we are saying that "those who know the whole character and mind and heart of God will gladly put their trust in him" (William Barclay).

"*Your Kingdom come.*" May God's kingdom of peace, love, justice and truth become a reality in our world and in the hearts of people.

As we grow in our awareness of the all-powerful and all-holy God, we also become aware of our neediness before God. We need what it takes to make it through each day (daily bread). We need mercy for our sins. And we need strength in times of trial. Note the prayer mentions the "*final*" test, a reference to the trials that will come at the end of the world. There is also recognition that as we experience God's mercy, we will extend that same mercy to all who have hurt us.

Having taught his disciples to *whom* they should pray (God as Papa) and *what* to pray for (God's Kingdom, bread, mercy and strength in adversity), Jesus then rounds out his lesson with advice on *how* to pray, namely, with persistence. As we read Jesus' brief parable, we should avoid comparing God to the reluctant friend whom we need to hassle to get what we need. Rather, the point is this: if a reluctant,

imperfect friend is willing to answer our plea for help, how much more so will God respond to our prayer. But we must *ask, speak* and *knock*.

[For a fuller commentary on the Lord's Prayer, see Lesson 28 of my Articles on the Catechism. Visit www.ascensioncatholic.net, go to Fr. Tobin's Writings and click on Catechism Topics.]

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what word/s or image/s in the readings caught your attention? Did they comfort, challenge, or touch you in some way?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. What can we learn from Abraham about how to relate to God? And how do you petition God?

3. Do you like setting aside daily time for prayer? If not, why not?

4. Is the prayer "thy will be done" easy or hard for you? What can help you to surrender to God's will when you don't feel like doing it?

5. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

JOURNALING. *Having listened to God's Word and to others' reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestion: Try to connect prayer with the issues of your life.

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

FACILITATOR: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: "*Jesus, when we were baptized, we were made a new creation in you. Help us to be aware of small ways that we can act as a new creation remade in your likeness.*"

**CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF
THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND
INTERCESSION**

Facilitator: Let us now conclude with prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray?

Pray for the grace of perseverance in prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

Prayer before Meditation

*Give me a candle of your Spirit, O God,
as I go down into the deep of my own being.*

Show me the hidden things.

*Take me down to the spring of my life,
and tell me my nature and my name.*

*Give me freedom to grow
so that I may become my true self—
the fulfillment of the seed
which you planted in me at my making.*

Out of the deep I cry unto thee, O God.

Amen.

- George Appleton

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

August 4, 2019 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Loving and caring God, all riches come from your generous hands. You give them to us so that we can enjoy the good things of this world and generously share them with those who are less fortunate. May we now generously share ourselves with each other as we break open your Word in our midst. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator: The first and third readings speak about the fleeting nature of human life, especially of earthly riches. Paul complements this point by encouraging his readers to seek "the things that are above."

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Ecclesiastes 1:2, 2:21-23

Ecclesiastes is a Greek translation of the word Qoheleth. It is not a proper name but a term for someone who convenes an assembly, such as a teacher. "Vanity," repeated six times in the reading, means breath or vapor, but Qoheleth uses that word to refer to things in life that are transient and therefore to him worthless and empty, e.g., riches, power, pleasures. Qoheleth (who does not know about the after-life) points out that upon death, all the things one has worked for so hard will evaporate into nothingness. The ancient sage frequently reminds his readers in this book to find meaning and purpose in the ordinary joys that God has given them in this life.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 90

As in the first reading, the psalmist speaks about the fleeting nature and transitoriness of human existence. The psalmist prays for the wisdom of heart that will enable people to live the few days they have committed to the things of God.

SECOND READING: Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

Our second reading is a strong exhortation to faithfully live out our baptism. Our new life in Christ calls us to keep our focus on heavenly things, to cast aside all sinful things, and to be detached from earthly things. Because of our conversion to Christ, he must be the center of our lives. As Paul said elsewhere, in contrast

to our relationship with Christ, all else is rubbish (Phil 3:8). In the final verse, Paul states that our new life in Christ should lead us to banish all forms of discrimination from our hearts.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 12:13-21

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

**A participant reads the Gospel again,
then all pause to reflect.**

GOSPEL: Luke 12:13-21

This Gospel reading is a part of a larger section which deals with the potential dangers of material riches for disciples of Jesus.

Someone asks Jesus to be the arbiter between him and his brother. Jesus refuses to comment but uses the situation to give a strong warning about the danger of spending one's life amassing material possessions. Jesus, a wisdom teacher, seeks to show the foolishness

of using one's energies to be rich in the eyes of people rather than to be rich in the eyes of God. The rich man is also foolish because he fails to place his trust in God. Jesus wants his disciples to be wary of the seductive nature of material wealth which can alienate us from God, and to seek spiritual wealth which guarantees eternal life.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what word/s or image/s in the readings caught your attention? Did they comfort, challenge, or touch you in some way?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. In the first reading, the author seems pretty bored and wonders what life is all about. Complete this sentence: "For me, the purpose of life is _____." To what extent does the way you spend your time, energy and money reflect your statement about life's purpose?

3. How hard is it for you to live in this world while "keeping your eyes fixed on what is above"?

4. In your opinion, what percentage of the parish budget should be set aside to serve the needs of the poor? How does the poor factor in your budget?

5. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

JOURNALING. *Having listened to God's Word and to others' reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestions: Repair a relationship that may have been strained by lies, greed or competition. Take time to reflect on your attitude towards material wealth.

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

FACILITATOR: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: "*Jesus, you call us to be responsible and generous stewards of your material and spiritual blessings. Guide and strengthen our efforts in this most important part of our lives.*"

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Facilitator: Let us now conclude with prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray?

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

Prayer for a Giving Heart

*I do not know how long I'll live
But while I live, Lord, let me give
Some comfort to someone in need
By smile or nod—kind word or deed
And let me do whatever I can
To ease things for my fellow man.
I want nothing but to do my part
To lift a tired or weary heart.
To change folks from frowns to smiles again—
Then I will not have lived in vain.
And I'll not care how long I'll live
If I can give—and give—and give.
Amen.*