Teaching the Liturgical Year

Lessons for October 2019

Sophia Institute
For Teachers
Teaching the Liturgical Year

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Five Lessons for October 2019

October 6, 2019: Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 13, 2019: Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 20, 2019: Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 27, 2019: Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Overview

In this week’s Gospel passage Jesus teaches His Apostles about the power of faith and about how we should not seek profit or praise for doing the minimum God asks of us. In this lesson, students will reflect upon how to be a servant of God and how with God, nothing is impossible, even for the least or smallest among us.

Directions

A. Have your students read the Gospel passage for the week and complete the focus and reflection questions.

B. Review and discuss the answers when they have completed the focus questions.

C. Have your students read and complete the Faith the Size of a Mustard Seed activity.

D. Review and discuss the answers together when they have completed the activity.

Answer Key

Focus Questions

1. “Increase our faith.”

2. “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.”

3. Jesus is suggesting that His Apostles currently have only a small amount of faith – smaller than a mustard seed.

4. One does not praise or reward their servant for doing only what is expected of him.
5. A servant should obediently and humbly do what is expected of him without expectation of a reward or praise.

**Faith the Size of a Mustard Seed Focus and Reflection Questions**

1. A prophet to the nations.
2. He did not know how to speak because he was too young.
3. “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak.”
4. God would be with him to deliver him and place His words in his mouth.
5. God appointed Jeremiah over nations and over kingdoms, and gave him the power to uproot and to tear down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant.
6. Jesus told His Apostles that with only a small amount of faith, they could do seemingly impossible things. Likewise, Jeremiah felt small, too young, to do what God asked of Him, but with God, even the smallest, or youngest, or least important can accomplish great, seemingly impossible things.
7. Accept reasoned answers.
8. Accept reasoned answers.
A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 17:5-10: Saying of Faith and the Attitude of a Servant

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.’”

Focus Questions

1. What request did the Apostles ask of Jesus?

2. A mustard seed is a tiny seed that can grow into a very large plant. What did Jesus say could be done with faith the size of a mustard seed?

3. What do you think Jesus is implying about the amount of faith His Apostles currently had?

4. What does Jesus say is the usual attitude one has towards a servant?

5. What does Jesus say should be the attitude of a servant?
Reflection Question

In this week’s Gospel, Jesus makes a connection between the amount of faith one has and the willingness to serve others obediently and humbly. In other words, our faith is made known and put into action by our faithfulness to God’s commands and how we serve others. What does God ask us to do? How are you faithful to His command? How have you served others faithfully according to God’s command this week? What are two ways you can serve others according to God’s command in this coming week?

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Directions: First, read the reflection about this week’s Gospel. Then, read the story of the call of Jeremiah and answer the focus and reflection questions.

In this Sunday’s Gospel reading from Luke, Jesus told His Apostles that if they had faith the size of a mustard seed, they could do seemingly impossible things. Jesus makes a similar statement in Matthew’s Gospel, telling His Apostles that if they had faith the size of a mustard seed, they could move mountains! While Jesus wasn’t telling us that we could literally uproot trees or move mountains, He is telling us that even the smallest of gifts from God – the gift of faith in this case – can result in great and wondrous things.

Sometimes in life we feel very small, one person out of many, unheard, or unnoticed. Because of this feeling, we think that we are unable to accomplish much, or to change things around us. But, just like Jesus tells us in this Gospel, great things can come out of the smallest of things. Nothing is impossible with God!

Read the story of the call of the prophet Jeremiah from Jeremiah 1:4-10 and then answer the focus and reflection questions:

The word of the LORD came to me: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you. “Ah, Lord GOD!” I said, “I do not know how to speak. I am too young!” But the LORD answered me, Do not say, “I am too young.” To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you—oracle of the LORD. Then the LORD extended his hand and touched my mouth, saying to me, See, I place my words in your mouth! Today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to uproot and to tear down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant.

Focus and Reflection Questions:

1. What did God call Jeremiah to be?
2. What reason did Jeremiah give at first for not wanting to accept this call?

3. How did God answer Jeremiah’s fear?

4. Why did God tell Jeremiah to not be afraid?

5. Over what did God appoint Jeremiah and what did He give Jeremiah the power and authority to do?

6. How is God’s call to Jeremiah similar to Jesus’ words about faith in this Sunday’s Gospel?

7. Describe a time that you felt small, unheard, or unnoticed. What happened?

8. Describe a time that you trusted in God and were able to do something that you were afraid of doing before or didn’t think that you could do on your own. What happened?

9. What are three ways that you can trust in God more this week?
The Cleansing of Ten Lepers (Middle and Upper Elementary)

October 13, 2019 – Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Overview
In this week’s Gospel passage, as Jesus continues His journey to Jerusalem, He meets ten lepers who cry out to Him for mercy. Jesus heals the lepers with only the power of His word, but only one returns to give thanks and praise to Jesus for His gift of healing. In this lesson, students will contemplate together the meaning of a gift and the proper disposition we should have towards gifts from God.

Directions
A. Have your students read the Gospel passage for the week and complete the focus questions.
B. Review and discuss the answers when they have completed the focus questions.
C. With a partner, have your students discuss the “Thanks Be to God!” reflection questions
D. When complete, call on students to share and discuss their answers.
E. Pray together the Prayer of Thanksgiving to God.

Answer Key
Focus Questions
1. Ten lepers.
2. To have pity on them.
3. Jesus told them to “Go show yourselves to the priests.” As they were going to the priests, they were healed.
4. One of the healed lepers, a Samaritan, returned to Jesus, glorified God, and fell at Jesus’ feet thanking Him.
5. “Ten were cleansed...where are the other nine?”
6. Jesus told the healed leper that his faith had saved him.
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.”

Focus Questions

1. Whom did Jesus meet as He journeyed to Jerusalem?
2. What did the people Jesus met ask of Him?
3. What did Jesus tell these people to do? What happened to them as they followed His command?
4. Who returned to Jesus? What did He do?
5. What did Jesus ask the one who returned?
6. What did Jesus tell the one who returned about his faith?
Thanks Be to God!

**Directions:** With a partner, discuss the following questions.

1. Share about a time that you gave someone a gift that you were really excited to give. What was the gift? Who was it for? Why were you excited to give it to that person? What was the recipient’s reaction to the gift?

2. Share about a time that you received a special gift from someone. What was the gift? How was it given to you? What was it like to receive the gift? How did you respond to the person who gave you the gift?

3. Discuss one of the following questions that most applies to you:
   - Have you ever given a gift to someone and they did not thank you for the gift? What did it feel like to not be thanked?
   - Have you ever given a gift to someone and that person did not ever use or wear the gift? What did it feel like to see your gift go unused/unworn?
   - How would you have felt if the person you gave the gift to in the first question did not thank you for the gift? Why?

4. Why is it the right thing to do to thank someone for a gift?

5. Why is it the right thing to do to use a gift you have received?

6. What gifts has God given you? How should you respond to God for the gifts that He has given you?
Prayer of Thanksgiving to God

Thank you God,
For all the blessings you have given to me.
Thank you God,
For giving me life and caring for me each day.
Thank you God,
For sending your Son so that I might have life.
Thank you God,
For your Church, so that I might be fed by your Word and by your Most Holy Body and Blood.
Thank you God,
For the example of holiness of all those men and woman who have gone before me and now reside in Heaven with you.
Thank you God,
For my family and loved ones.
Thank you God,
For my friends and those close to me.
Thank you God,
For the roof over my head, the food on my table, the clothes on my back, and the good things you have gifted to me.
Thank you God,
For my school and the gift of an education to grow in body, mind, and soul.
Thank you God,
For preparing a place for me in Heaven, and guiding my path always to you.
Thank you God.
Amen.
TEACHING THE LITURGICAL YEAR

The Parable of the Persistent Widow (Upper and Middle Elementary)

October 20, 2019 – Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Overview

In this week’s Gospel passage, Jesus gives a parable to teach His Apostles about the importance of persistence in prayer. In this lesson, students will explore some sayings of the saints about prayer and apply this wisdom to their own lives.

Directions

A. Have your students read the Gospel passage for the week and complete the focus questions.
B. Review and discuss the answers when they have completed the focus questions.
C. Have your students read and complete the Pray Always activity.
D. When complete, have your students share with a partner their responses. Then, call on a few students to share with the class.

Answer Key

Focus Questions

1. The necessity of praying always without becoming weary.
2. He neither feared God nor respected any human being.
3. For him to render a just decision for her against her adversary.
4. Because she kept bothering him (and out of fear that she would come and strike him).
5. God will “secure the rights” of those who cry out to Him day and night, like the judge responded to the widow who repeatedly brought her case to his attention.
6. He will not do so slowly, but will see that justice is done speedily.
A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 18:1-8: The Parable of the Persistent Widow

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?”

Focus Questions

1. What was the stated purpose of the parable in this Gospel?
2. How is the judge described in this parable?
3. What did the widow continually request of the judge?
4. Though he was unwilling to comply with the widow’s request for a long time, why did the judge eventually give in?
5. What comparison does Jesus make between God and the judge in the parable?
6. What does Jesus say about how God will answer the prayers of those who call out to Him?
**Pray Always**

The saints give us some of the best examples of a life of prayer. They understood that we should pray always –day and night, as Jesus taught His Apostles. This is one reason why they are saints!

Below are some quotes from the saints about prayer. Read through the quotes, and then choose one that particularly speaks to you. Then, in the space beneath the quote, rewrite the quote in your own words, describing what it teaches us about prayer. Finally, in the space provided, write a brief paragraph about why we should follow Jesus’ teaching to pray to God always.

1. “Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you.” –St. Augustine

2. “He who prays most receives most.” –St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori

3. “We must pray without tiring, for the salvation of mankind does not depend upon material success . . . but on Jesus alone.” –St. Frances Xavier Cabrini

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4. “Let him never cease from prayer who has once begun it, be his life ever so wicked; for prayer is the way to amend it, and without prayer such amendment will be much more difficult.” –St. Teresa of Avila

5. “Without Prayer nothing good is done. God's works are done with our hands joined, and on our knees. Even when we run, we must remain spiritually kneeling before Him.” –Blessed Luigi Orione

6. “We must pray without ceasing, in every occurrence and employment of our lives—that prayer which is rather a habit of lifting up the heart to God as in a constant communication with Him.” –St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

7. “At the times when you remember God, increase your prayers, so that when you forget Him, the Lord may remind you.” –St. Mark the Ascetic

8. “Do nothing at all unless you begin with prayer.” –St Ephraem the Syrian
Write a brief paragraph about why we should follow Jesus’ teaching to pray to God always:
Overview
In this week’s Gospel passage, Jesus tells a parable of a Pharisee and a tax collector who come to the Temple to pray. The Pharisee prays in order to boast of his own holiness while the tax collector humbly begs for God’s mercy. In this lesson, students will reflect upon sacred art to help them better understand the parable and reflect upon their own disposition of prayer.

Directions
A. Have your students read the Gospel passage for the week and complete the focus and reflection questions.
B. Review and discuss the answers when they have completed the focus questions.
C. In groups of three or four, have your students reflect on the painting *The Pharisee and the Publican* by James Tissot using the given reflection questions.
D. When complete, call on groups to share and discuss their answers.

Answer Key
Focus Questions
1. To those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else.
2. A Pharisee and a tax collector. They went to the Temple area to pray.
3. He thanked God that he was not like the rest of humanity – greedy, dishonest, adulterous – or like the tax collector with him. He also boasted of his own religious acts, such as fasting and tithing.
4. He stood at a distance and would not look to Heaven. He prayed for God's mercy because he was a sinner.

5. The tax collector, because he humbled himself.
Sunday Reading

A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 18:9-14: The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Jesus addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. “Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, ‘O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity --greedy, dishonest, adulterous -- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.’ But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’ I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Focus Questions

1. To whom did Jesus address this parable?

2. Who are the two people in the parable? What were they doing?

3. In Jesus’ time, the Pharisees were a group of Jewish religious leaders who believed in holding to the strictest interpretation of the Old Testament Law. They also believed in separating the Jewish people from foreigners in order to keep the Jewish religion pure. What was the prayer of the Pharisee in this parable?

4. In Jesus’ time, tax collectors were greatly disliked by the people. They were seen as public sinners. Typically, a tax collector would collect from people the required amount of tax by the Romans, but then collect even more from people as their own fee. There were no rules governing the tax collectors’ fees and the people had no choice but to pay. What was the prayer of the tax collector in this parable?

5. Whom did Jesus teach was justified in their prayer? Why?
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Directions: Reflect on and discuss the painting *The Pharisee and the Publican* (C. 1886-1894, Brooklyn Museum) by James Tissot using the following questions.

1. What stands out to you about this painting? Why?

2. Which figure is the Pharisee from the Gospel story? Which figure is the tax collector (publican)? Why do you think so?

3. How does this painting illustrate the parable from the Gospel story? At times in our lives, we can be more like the Pharisee. Sometimes we become proud of our “holiness” or only go through the motions so that others can see us. God calls us to be more like the tax collector. He wants us to be humble, repent of our sin, and seek His mercy. How can you be more like the tax collector in your own life?