

saint mary's press

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daily bible reflections for teens

Jean Marie Hiesberger
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INTRODUCTION

Take Ten: that's what you're doing in these *Daily Bible Reflections for Teens*—taking ten minutes to do something simple and important! *Take Ten* is easy to use. Just open it to any date; you'll see that the page for each day follows the same simple format. It always begins with a Bible passage. This is followed by a commentary that connects the passage with your own life. Next is either a brief prayer or an action to make the Scripture passage active in your life. Finally, a suggestion for something more to read from *The Catholic Youth Bible™ (CYB)* is included, to help you go deeper into God's word today.

The Scripture passage is chosen from the Mass reading for the day, so that often it is the same one Catholic Christians all over the world are reading and listening to. Sometimes it is taken from the readings for a particular saint's feast day. You will be able to tell that from the title of the reflection. So, in a real sense, when you read the day's reflection, you are connecting with millions of people praying with the same Bible passage!

We suggest you use these reflections by first reading the Bible verse slowly and more than once, and then reflecting to see if a word or phrase jumps out at you or catches

your interest. Let yourself be still for a minute or two with whatever thoughts come to you. Just sit quietly and let them sink in before you read the reflection.

Then read the short commentary. This paragraph often explains the Scripture passage a bit, but most important, it suggests a meaning or an application for your life. We make a difference as Christ's disciples by the way we live each day, and the commentary focuses on that. Sometimes the commentary poses a question, other times a challenge for you to think about. You'll have your own ideas, too. Write down your reaction if you wish. The important thing is to try each day in some small way to live the way Christ wants you to.

Prayer is the way we stay in touch with our God. The reflection ends with a prayer suggestion related to the message of the day. The prayer suggestions are there to help you talk with God. Read them and see if they say what you want to say. They are really prayer starters; it is hoped that they will inspire you to sit quietly with your thoughts and talk to God about whatever comes to mind.

If you use this reflection book with the *CYB*, you can expand your reflection even more. The articles in the *CYB* offer other insights into many of the daily reflection themes. The "To go deeper" sections will direct you to those articles. Take time to check out the recommended reading.

Some of the ideas on the pages of *Take Ten* come from teenagers like you. You'll also have your own ideas as you take ten minutes a day to nurture your relationship with God—a habit that will enrich your spiritual life.



God Bless You

The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon
you, and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance
upon you, and give you peace.

(Numbers 6:24–26)

This blessing, which the Lord told Moses to give to God's people, is a wonderful way to start the year. The Lord is blessing you now and through the entire year, and the Lord will give you peace. Keeping this thought with you each morning will help you travel through the day and throughout the new year with confidence that you are not alone.

Dear Jesus, sometimes I forget that you want me to live a blessed life. Help me remember each day that staying close to you is the secret to life's blessings and peace.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “God Bless You” near Numbers 6:22–27 in the *CYB*.

Who Is My Neighbor?

Those who say, “I love God,” and hate their brothers or sisters are liars.

. . . The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

(1 John 4:20–21)

Who is our brother and who is our sister? The author of this letter is not talking just about our siblings or family members. Nor is this quotation just about people we like or who treat us well. It is about the people with whom we rub shoulders every day, the people we see on the news, those who live on other continents, and even people who wish us ill or harm us. We may not feel love for them, but we can at least not wish them harm, and we can pray for them as well as ask God to help us in our attitude and actions toward them.

Heavenly Father, help me to see others with your eyes. Let me see each person I meet today—even those I would normally turn away from—as my brother or my sister.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Understanding Love” near 1 John 4:7–21 in the *CYB*.

Childlike, Not Childish

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.

(1 John 3:1)

Imagine the most loving parent possible, someone who cares more for their son or daughter than for themselves and who will do anything for them. That is the kind of parent God is, a loving parent who created you and allowed Jesus to be killed for the salvation of the world. As one little boy said, “What a God!”

Although we are God’s children, that doesn’t mean we should act childish. We can be childish by always thinking of ourselves and praying only “gimme” prayers. Rather, we should be childlike. To be childlike is to feel awe and wonder. What is it about God, our loving parent, that is awesome to you?

In your own words, pray a prayer of gratitude and thanksgiving to the God who loves you so much and has given you so much.

► To go deeper: Read 1 John 2:29—3:24.

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

(Mark 6:34)

During his public life, Jesus was a teacher. He explained to all who would listen how much God loved them and how they should live their lives taking care of one another. Elizabeth Ann Seton, an American woman, did much the same. She was concerned about her children's education, so she started a school in Baltimore. She grew to have a great concern for the education of poor children, and started an order of nuns dedicated to teaching poor children and doing other works of charity. This saint didn't work miracles or have visions in her lifetime. She did what each of us is to do: live as well as we can the life we've been given.

Loving God, I want to follow the example of Saint Elizabeth Seton and live this day the way you want me to. Let me remember that I also teach through my actions and the values that guide my life.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read "Stand Up and Be Counted!" near Amos 8:4–8 in the *CYB*.

Loving
My Brother and My Sister

Whoever says, “I am in the light,” while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling.

(1 John 2:9–10)

The author of this letter reminds us that loving all God’s children is essential to living in the light of Christ. That makes this Scripture passage a real challenge! Some people are just not as lovable as others. You’ve probably come across someone like this: the person who tries too hard to be liked, the person who can never stay on topic, or someone whose personal hygiene leaves something to be desired. Love means looking beyond human weaknesses to find the goodness God has placed in every human heart. When we do, our own capacity for goodness grows.

Dear Jesus, you never said it would be easy to be your follower. It is easier to love people who are far away than some of those I am with in my daily life. I need your help to put this challenge into practice.

▶ To go deeper: Read 1 John 2:7–17.

Epiphany

On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

(Matthew 2:11)

The three kings traveled far to see Jesus. In your life Jesus comes to you wherever you are. The Magi offered him homage and treasures. The homage you offer Christ is in your own prayer life and especially in your participation in the Eucharist, where he comes to you in the form of bread and wine. The treasure you offer is the kind of life you lead, the example you give as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

O God of generous gifts to me, accept this day and all that I do as homage to you and to your Son.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Jesus Brought the Good News of Salvation to People of All Races” near Matthew 2:1–12 in the *CYB*.

On the Mountain

Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

(Mark 6:45–46)

Jesus prayed in many different ways. This is one of several times when we are told that he went off by himself to pray. We, too, pray in many different ways. One of those is the way Jesus prayed here. Your “mountain” might be your room or a park bench or a chapel. It is just someplace where you can spend a little time alone and quiet. What happens next? You talk with your friend Jesus. Just have a conversation, telling him what’s going on, what your concerns are, and what you need.

Dear Jesus, take me with you to the mountain and help me talk with God as you did. Then help me listen with an open heart.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “The Making of a Prayer” near James 5:13 in the *CYB*.

Open Your Ears and Your Heart

“Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?”

(John 4:29)

This Samaritan woman, whom people looked down on, became a messenger of truth and wisdom. As a society we have come a long way in overcoming stereotypes and bigotry. Unfortunately, subtle forms of bigotry and discrimination still exist. This is especially true in regard to recent immigrants of other ethnic groups. But those peoples and their cultures will have something to teach us. Try to open your ears and your heart to those individuals today.

Holy Spirit, remind me during this day to listen to each person with the same respect and openness.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Stretch Me, Lord” near Acts of the Apostles 11:1–18 in the *CYB*.

Who, Me Preach?

That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

(Acts of the Apostles 10:37–38)

The Acts of the Apostles tells how the Apostles preached the message of Jesus to people who were not yet followers of Christ. Still today many people are not Jesus's followers. The late bishop John Sullivan often said that Jesus doesn't need to be here anymore to preach his message because he has us here to do it. Most of us think we're not preachers. Yet we really are—by the way we act and the way we treat others. As the old saying goes, "What you are shouts so loudly that I cannot hear what you say."

Who are the people in your school or community who do not fully know Jesus or his message? Try to think of some ways you might share Jesus with them through your words and actions.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read Saint Peter's speech in Acts 10:34–43.

God Listens to Our Needs

And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

(1 John 5:14)

For what do you pray? for things? for good grades? for understanding? for patience? for the ability to cope with a situation? for courage? Perhaps you pray at some time for each of those things and more! Notice the condition in the Scripture verse, “if we ask anything according to his will.” Sometimes the hardest part is figuring out what God’s will is for us. So though we probably shouldn’t expect God to step in and change a grade or get us a job, we can expect that the ways God answers our prayers—or doesn’t answer our prayers—will help us to know his will better.

Dear Lord, I'll keep praying for the things that I believe are your will for me. And in the ways you answer my prayers, help me to know your will more clearly.

- ▶ To go deeper: Pray “The Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi” near Ephesians 6:10–17 in the *CYB*.

The Baptism of the Lord

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

(Luke 3:21–22)

None of us had such a dramatic and exciting baptism as Jesus did! But yours was just as important, whether you remember it or not. It was the beginning of your life as a Christian. And God just as truly said of you, “With you I am well pleased.”

Learn about your own baptismal day—who was there, where it occurred, what it was like. Take a few minutes to think about times in your life when you know God would say, “With you I am well pleased.”

Holy God, on the day of my baptism, I was brought into your family, the Body of Christ. Give me the strength to live a holy life that is pleasing to you.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Introducing John the Baptist” near Luke 3:1–20 in the *CYB*.

Good News

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

(Mark 1:15)

Sometimes it seems like we need to “repent” every day. It is not always easy to be the person God is calling you to be, and so sometimes you fail. The good news is that God’s forgiveness is unlimited and help is always just a prayer away. The good news is that God believes in you even more than you do. Even more good news is that when you are faithfully responding to God’s call, you are helping to bring about the Kingdom of God.

God of good news, you know that I want to do your will and that it is not always easy. I know you will both forgive me and help me do better if I acknowledge my sin. For this I praise you and thank you.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Called to Follow Jesus” near Mark 1:16–20 in the *CYB*.

Hearing His Voice

For we have become partners of Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end. As it is said,

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts.”

(Hebrews 3:14–15)

How do we hear God’s voice? Taking even a few minutes each day to be still and think about the day ahead or the day just completed is a wonderful start. Quietly ask God to help you clear your mind as you think about the day’s events. What could you do in your treatment of others that would help you be a “partner with Christ”? What did you do today for which you are thankful? Is there someone you want to treat better tomorrow than you did today? Put all this in God’s hands. Then listen for God’s voice. Do not harden your heart.

Start or continue a practice of quiet prayer early in the morning or before you go to bed. Consider keeping a journal of what you might be hearing God communicate to you.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Have a Heart” near Ezekiel 11:19–20 in the CYB.

How Should I Pray?

“You shall say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’”

(1 Samuel 3:9)

God was speaking to young Samuel, but Samuel didn't recognize God's voice. We may think of God speaking to people as something that only happened long ago or to certain special people. However, the Lord speaks to each of us. It may not be in a vivid dream or a voice we hear in the night. But God does speak to us—in the quiet of our hearts, in the Scriptures, through certain people who care about us and offer us wise advice, through nature, and in the circumstances of our lives, the things that happen to us. Our task is to have big ears to listen and quiet time to say, “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.”

Holy Spirit, help me to be as trusting as Samuel in hearing and responding to the voice of God. Make me aware of the many ways God can speak to me every day.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Eli Teaches Samuel How to Pray” near 1 Samuel 3:5 in the *CYB*.

Forgive Me

He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.”

(Mark 2:17)

Jesus knew what it was like to live as a human being. Amazingly, he struggled with the same things we do, so he understands our sins and failures. And we all sin. We sin in little ways and sometimes in big ways. What Jesus does is stand by us and forgive us. What we must do is admit our sins and ask Jesus for forgiveness. We also need to ask those we've offended for forgiveness—and sometimes we need to forgive ourselves.

For what do you need forgiveness? Besides God's, whose forgiveness do you need? What will you do about that?

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Getting Personal” near Mark 2:13–17 in the *CYB*.

Faithful Friends

Then some people came bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay.

(Mark 2:3–4)

What wonderful friends the paralyzed man in this story had! Who wouldn't want friends like them? The friends we choose are a sign of who we are and what is important to us. Friends have a great influence on how we think, what we do, even who we are. Choosing friends who have the same kind of values we have helps us live those values. Befriending someone who wants to be like us is one way we can give back what we've received from our own family and friends. Look around at who you have as friends. Thank God for the positive influence the people you chose have on you.

Dear Jesus, you know how important friends are in helping us live as your disciples. Thank you for my friends, and help me to be a positive influence on my friends in return.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Faithful Friends” near Mark 2:8 in the CYB.

Follow Wisely

As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up and followed him.

(Mark 2:14)

This is such an amazing scene, that Levi would just follow another person so easily. Sometimes people today do the same thing. They follow media stars, musicians, celebrities. They follow other people their own age who might be going in a different direction or doing something they've never tried. Sometimes when people follow others, they don't even recognize that's what they're doing. Who are the people you look up to and try to be like? What is it about them that attracts you?

Christ, light of the world, help me see clearly the path and the people to follow. Let me be strong enough not to follow those who would lead me away from you.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read more about who Jesus called in Mark 1:16–20, 2:13–17.

The Small Things Count

For God is not unjust; he will not overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake.

(Hebrews 6:10)

Sometimes when we think of saints and holy people, we think of the people who do great or courageous or public acts. It is a mistake to think only of those. Small acts can make a big difference in a person's life. The person who receives an act of kindness can have their whole day, sometimes their whole life changed. Whether you offer a ride to someone, give someone a smile in the hallway, help another student understand an assignment he or she is struggling with, or pick up the house without being asked, God will not overlook your actions. And doing such things as a way of life is what makes someone a saint.

Dear God, help me to open my eyes today and discover where I can do an act of love for your sake.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read "Anchor of the Soul" near Hebrews 6:19–20 in the *CYB*.



Hunger

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.”

(Matthew 25:35)

Many people in every town and city are hungry for real food. There are many different ways to be hungry and thirsty besides physical hunger. One person might hunger for friendship, another might be hungry for peace and quiet and time alone, another for help with solving a problem. Christ calls us to respond to the hungers around us, the physical hungers as well as the emotional and spiritual hungers. But in order to respond, we have to take time to notice the hungers around us.

Look at the members of your family. For what do you think each of them might be hungering? What could you do about it?

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “You Did It to Me” near Matthew 26:2 in the *CYB*.

How Do I Look?

But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

(1 Samuel 16:7)

How easy it is to judge someone by how they look! How easy it is to criticize yourself because of how you look or don't look. Here the Lord reminds us of what is important and what is lasting through life. Appearances will fade. What is in the heart will not.

Dear Jesus, you know what it feels like to be rejected and made fun of. I want to look past physical appearances and pay more attention to what is most important inside. Help me to do that today.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read the story of David anointed as king, in 1 Samuel 16:1–13.

The Right Thing to Do

“Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge.”
(Ruth 1:16)

At great risk Ruth stayed with her mother-in-law, Naomi, when they were both left alone after the death of their husbands. She did this because it was the right thing to do. She volunteered to care for Naomi even when Naomi told Ruth to leave and return to her own family, who would take care of her. There are so many easier ways for you to volunteer your time than to do what Ruth did. We volunteer in works of service without expecting thanks just because it is the right thing to do. Remember Ruth as you think about where you will offer to volunteer.

Make a list of your skills and interests. Beside it make a list of places where you can volunteer in your community. Draw lines connecting your skills and interests to the places you might use them.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Service to the Poor and the Community” near Ruth, chapter 3 in the *CYB*.

Watch Over Me

“My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish.”

(John 10:27–28)

Chris didn't have parents like Ted's. Ted's parents had taken care of him since he was a baby, always supported him and encouraged him, and did their best to teach him to do the right thing. Chris, on the other hand, never had much support from his parents. He hid his loneliness by acting aloof and confident. It was only when he met an adult mentor who took real interest in his life that he began to understand the good shepherd parable. We don't like to feel helpless and dependent, but most people have those feelings occasionally. When you do, remember that like a good shepherd, Christ is there for you, too.

Jesus, my shepherd, help me to remember that I'm never all on my own. Even when I am not aware of it, you are there to guide and support me.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Jesus, the Good Shepherd” near John 10:16 in the *CYB*.

Courage

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, “You are not also one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.”

(John 18:25)

Do you suppose Peter was scared? Do you suppose it was just so much easier to fit in with the crowd than to stand up for what he believed, to stand up for his friend? How understandable. What would have helped Peter to be stronger and not give in to that kind of pressure? To have courage in situations where we are tempted to give in as Peter did, we have to practice courage in small things. Obeying the speed limit when someone dares you to speed, or honoring your curfew when someone makes fun of you may seem unimportant, but doing those things builds character—the kind of character Peter needed that night.

God of friendship and understanding, help me practice courage in some small way today.

- ▶ To go deeper: To see how Peter is forgiven, read “The Humble Church” near John 21:15–19 in the *CYB*.

It Takes Conviction

“Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away.”

(Mark 4:5–6)

It may be easy to know the right thing to do, and to believe you're going to do it. But sometimes when the chips are down or when the pressure of friends tempts you in the wrong direction, it is often easier not to follow your conscience. Maybe it's leaving out an unpopular person from your plans, maybe it's cheating a little on a test or a paper, and maybe it's giving in to cigarettes or drugs. Who and what helps you to be planted in “good soil,” that is, to have the deep convictions and courage you need not to give in at times like that?

Holy Spirit, give me the conviction to follow my conscience in doing what is right, even when I am tempted not to.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Jesus Teaches Us Through Stories!” near Mark 4:1–34 in the *CYB*.

God Created Us All

“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

(Matthew 25:40)

In the alley of a crowded Turkish bazaar, a dwarfed man who could hardly walk crept along carrying a bathroom scale. The merchants would leave their stands to give him a coin, stand on the scale, and weigh themselves. Actually they paid very little attention to what the scale read. They were just helping the man keep his dignity while offering a bit of help.

Who decides who is the “least” among us? No one you know carries a bathroom scale, but some people do carry the burden of being looked down on. Jesus is clear about how we should treat them.

O God who created all of us with love, help me remember those words of Jesus’s today.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “The Body of Christ” near 1 Corinthians 12:12–31 in the *CYB*.

Whose Faith Is It?

I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.

(2 Timothy 1:5)

Sometimes we have the faith that we do because it's our family tradition. Sometimes it begins with us. In either case, at a certain age we must make a choice and a decision about it for ourselves. It is an important decision, more important than what school to attend or what job to choose. Other people may even make fun of our choice to live a life of faith pleasing to God. But we have God's promise of grace to be with us in both choosing and living our faith. Just ask.

Dear Jesus, I ask for the gift of faith that I might believe in you and follow you all the days of my life.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read "Do Not Be Ashamed" near 2 Timothy 1:6–18 in the *CYB*.

Using Your Talents

He said to them, “Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand?”

(Mark 4:21)

You were born with a certain personality and with certain talents and gifts. Some of them seem to grow and develop on their own. Some need to be practiced and developed. It is your responsibility to discover the gifts God has given you and not keep them hidden, as under a bushel basket. Sometimes friends and certain adults can help name your talents so that you can discover how to use those gifts of God during your lifetime.

Find someone you can talk to about the gifts she or he sees in you. Make a list of those gifts, and pray about how God might want you to use them.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14–30.

Saint Thomas Aquinas

“Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.”

(Mark 4:8)

The farmer in this parable had good crops when he planted the seed in soil that could make good use of it and help it grow. Saint Thomas Aquinas, the great philosopher and teacher, was “good soil” for God’s word. He had gifts of great intelligence and an ability to write and teach, which he used so well he has influenced our Church for centuries. You, too, have been given gifts and talents to use during your lifetime. God is confident that you, like the farmer and like Saint Thomas Aquinas, are good soil and will use these gifts to the best of your ability.

Dear Jesus, like Saint Thomas Aquinas, help me to be good soil for your word. Be with me as your word grows within me and I discover how you wish me to use my gifts and talents.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read the entire parable of the sower in Mark 4:1–20.

Be Not Afraid

He woke up and rebuked the wind,
and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!”

(Mark 4:39)

Jesus was asleep in the boat. His friends were awake and frightened by the windstorm that came up. The seas were rough. Imagine how they felt in their little boat, afraid and helpless. That is how you might feel sometimes, too. And the disciples show us exactly what to do when that happens. They take their anxieties and concerns to Jesus.

Who or what is it that causes you to be afraid? a person? a challenge you face? a fear of the unknown tomorrow? Place your fears in Jesus’s care and ask him to be with you. Listen with your heart to his words, “Peace! Be still!”

Dear Lord, calm the fear inside me, just as you calmed the storm for the disciples when they asked you.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Be Not Afraid” near Joshua 1:5–9 in the *CYB*.

You Are Not Alone

They were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.

(Acts of the Apostles 2:1–4)

The Apostles now knew they had the Holy Spirit with them, and so they weren't afraid anymore. They found courage and strength that they didn't know they had. Even though you don't walk around with a tongue of fire on your head, the Holy Spirit is also with you. Remember that when you feel challenged or uncertain. Remember that when you are afraid or not sure what to do. "Come, Holy Spirit" is a simple and important prayer for each of us.

Come, Holy Spirit, and fill me with courage and strength to proclaim the good news of Jesus to the world.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read "Send Us Your Spirit!" near Acts 1:24 in the *CYB*.

Saint John Bosco

But Jesus . . . said to him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you.”

(Mark 5:19)

Those words of Jesus’s might have been spoken by John Bosco to the young people he taught. John Bosco was an educator who started schools and eventually a religious order called the Salesians. Saint John Bosco believed in educating the whole person, not just the mind but also the body and the soul. Though he trained young people for the work world, he knew that what we do in our study, our play, and our work are all important. He said that all three of these need to be connected to our faith and to our understanding of Christ’s love for us. How can you keep a balance of study, play, and work in your own busy life?

Saint John Bosco, you were so wise and helpful to young people during your life. Help me discover the same values and balance in my life that you taught your students.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Jesus Grows in Age and Wisdom” near Luke 2:41–52 in the *CYB*.

God's Family

Honor everyone. Love the family of believers.

(1 Peter 2:17)

Who is my family? We can actually answer the question in more ways than one. We think first of our immediate family at home. Regardless of what it is like—one parent or two, one sibling or many—it is our family. You may also belong to other groups—close friends, teams—that feel like family to you. You also have your Church family. Catholics are never Catholic Christians alone. The Holy Spirit brings us together as a community, a family of believers. And just as in your biological family, you can be either a passive member or a contributing member.

Father of us all, thank you for the gift of the family of believers. Help me to notice others in my faith community. Help me to consider how I might be helpful to other members of that family.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Part of the Family” near 1 Peter 2:9–17 in the CYB.



Praise the Lord

Sing to God, sing praises to his name

.....
be exultant before him.

(Psalm 68:4)

One of the most important ways we honor people is by singing their praises. When we compliment people, several things happen. We share their goodness with others. We affirm them for who they are and what they do. And most important, we show that the quality or qualities they possess matter to us. God doesn't really need our praise. But *we* need to praise God. When we sing songs of praise and thanksgiving or participate in community prayer, we are saying that God's qualities are important for us. Just doing that helps us to be strong in those same qualities.

Give someone, especially someone who doesn't expect it, a compliment today. When you pray the Gloria at Mass, pay attention to the words of praise.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read "Black People Praise the Lord" near Psalm 68 in the *CYB*.

Have Faith!

“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

(Mark 5:34)

Faith is the hallmark of Jesus’s ministry. Many of his miracles are based on the faith of the people requesting his help. Today we are bombarded by advertisements competing for our belief. People tell us to “eat this food and lose weight,” “buy this car and be popular,” “wear these clothes and be liked.” Taking time to reflect on who we believe and what we believe is essential to healthy Christian spirituality. As Christians we are called to believe we are part of the Body of Christ and we share in the mission and ministry of Jesus. Our belief empowers us to try things that may seem impossible otherwise.

Holy Spirit, you show us how to believe and what to believe in. Sustain us now as we struggle to make a difference in the world under your guidance.

► To go deeper: Read about Jesus’s healings in Mark 5:21–43.

Big Trouble

“I am in great distress; let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great.”

(2 Samuel 24:14)

Sometimes we are “up to our neck in alligators.” Our troubles abound. Friends are mad. Parents don’t understand. We are so far behind at work or school that it seems hopeless. A significant relationship has ended. We feel abandoned. We don’t know where to turn. David felt the same way, as indicated by the story from 2 Samuel. However, David knew that no matter how difficult life seems, no matter how much we have messed up, God is merciful. God is always ready to forgive, to give us a fresh start, to assure us that life is worth living.

Dear Jesus, when life seems desperate, give me a new heart to begin again. Help me always to be aware of your love and support in my life.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “The Lord Is My Rock” near 2 Samuel 22:1–4 in the CYB.

Repent! Change Your Heart!

So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent.

(Mark 6:12)

To repent means to have a change of heart. Repentance beckons us not to be headstrong. It challenges us to begin again with a “clean heart.” To be repentant, we need to look at what is important in our lives. What are our most cherished dreams? What relationships need attention?

Goals help us to follow through on our insights about repentance. Leaders often note that little is achieved without goals. Goals help us to succeed, to know where we are going. What goals do you wish to set so you can live with a clean heart?

Dear Jesus, you were always in touch with what your Father had in mind for you. Help me repent from my selfish ways so that I may see more clearly your direction in my life.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “When the Good News Comes Calling” near Mark 6:6–13 in the *CYB*.

Dealing with the Death of a Friend

Herod himself had sent men who arrested John [the Baptist], bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias. . . . [Later] the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head.

(Mark 6:17,27)

When a friend dies because of a sickness, violence, or an accident, we are devastated. How could it happen? The person had so much to live for. It all seems so unfair. We are sad and angry. That's how the friends of John the Baptist felt.

Jesus was saddened by the death of John the Baptist. John was his cousin, his friend, his colleague in spreading the Good News. After John's death Jesus withdrew to a quiet place to have time for reflection (see Matthew 14:13). When we experience the loss of someone we love, it is good to take time alone to reflect on the meaning of the person's life and the person's impact on our life.

Holy Spirit, help me adjust to life without my good friend. Empower me to witness to the spirit and values by which my friend lived.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read "Growing Through Loss" near Lamentations, chapter 5 in the *CYB*.

*Let Me Know
Right from Wrong*

“Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil.”

(1 Kings 3:9)

When God asked Solomon what he wanted as king, Solomon asked for understanding and the ability to know right from wrong. Today we continue to need those gifts. How great it would be if we could truly understand those who do not agree with us, those who avoid us, and those who try to manipulate us. Sometimes we are so influenced by our peers that we forget we know the difference between right and wrong. A wise leader understands with the heart and mind the difference between right and wrong, and acts to do the right thing, even when those actions are unpopular.

Heavenly Father, strengthen me to be able to both understand with my heart and act from my conscience so that I can continue to be your effective disciple.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “God, Give Me Wisdom!” near 1 Kings 3:4–15 in the CYB.

Whom Shall I Send?

I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
“Whom shall I send, and who will go
for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send
me!”

(Isaiah 6:8)

God was looking for someone to send to his people to help them understand the faithfulness he expected from them. At first Isaiah was hesitant because he did not feel worthy of God's call, yet he ultimately responded by saying, “Send me.” God needs us to make his presence known to others. We are God's arms, legs, and mouth-piece.

Which of your friends needs to hear that God loves them and wants them to be happy? Which friends need encouragement to turn their lives around so that they can grow closer to God? Besides words, what actions need to be taken so people can see God's presence?

Dear Jesus, help me to be your voice. Give me words that others will understand, even if I don't use your name. Let my actions reflect my words as I try to help others know your love for them.

▶ To go deeper: Read the story of Isaiah's call in Isaiah 6:1–8.

Touch and Healing

They laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

(Mark 6:56)

Have you ever considered how you can share in Jesus's healing ministry? In almost all the stories of Jesus healing people, there is the element of touch. Though we might not have miraculous healing powers, through the gift of touch, we have some power to help make people whole. We give hugs when people are grieving to let them know they are not alone. We give a pat on the back to let people know we are with them and support them. Physical therapists massage sore muscles and loosen them up, enabling us to continue to play a game. We give "high fives" as a sign of affirmation and congratulations.

Holy Spirit, empower me to share in Jesus's healing ministry. Help me to be aware of when the gift of touch can bring healing into another person's life. Let me never misuse this great gift.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read "Those Thickheaded Disciples" near Mark 6:30–52 in the *CYB*.



Be Genuine!

“This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.”
(Mark 7:6)

Jesus abhorred hypocrisy. He had little time for “fakes,” people who pretended to follow the law but who in their hearts were far from being faithful. Jesus was less concerned that people follow the law to the last detail than that they love with their hearts. Sometimes it is easy to go to church every Sunday and look like a Christian, but when it comes to treating people as we would like to be treated, we totally fail. Or we exhibit all the external signs of being a Christian, but do not reach out to others and care for them as Jesus calls us to do.

Dear Jesus, enable me to live with integrity, incorporating your values into my heart and making my life a genuine witness to your Good News.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read what Jesus has to say about holiness and integrity in Mark 7:14–23.

Evil Comes from Within

“For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly.”

(Mark 7:21–22)

Sometimes when we see so much evil in the world, we think of it as external to us. Evil is out there somewhere. But in Mark's Gospel, Jesus tells us that evil comes from the heart. When a lot of people are selfish and refuse to share the goods of the earth, poverty happens. When people want to control others, war happens. When people see others as objects of pleasure, licentiousness (sexual promiscuity) happens. Evil begins in the heart. Injustice begins within people. What elements of greed, deceit, or licentiousness are you harboring in your heart? What can you do to eliminate them?

Dear Jesus, I wish to be a true follower of yours. Cleanse my heart from an inclination toward evil and help me create a more just world.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Sin's Source” near Mark 7:14–23 in the CYB.

Which Way Is Your Heart Turned?

Then the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD. . . . [Solomon] did not observe what the LORD commanded.

(1 Kings 11:9–10)

Solomon displeased God by following false gods. That temptation is with us today. Some people make a god out of material things—making demands on parents to buy only designer clothes, to have the latest technology, or to go on expensive vacations. In other words, material things become a major focus of life. Other people may make gods out of other human beings. These people have undue influence on their followers, and the followers go along with the mandates of the leader rather than God. An example might be a gang leader or a popular person in school whom people follow without question.

Take time to think about people or things that might have an undue influence over you. Are they keeping you from following Jesus with your whole mind and heart? Are those your false gods?

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Solomon’s Sin” near 1 Kings 11:1–8 in the CYB.

Listen Up!

Then looking up to heaven, he [Jesus] sighed and said to him, . . . “Be opened.” And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.

(Mark 7:34–35)

Jesus healed the deaf man. Sometimes we are “deaf”—deaf to those struggling around us, deaf to the poverty in our country and in other countries, deaf to the needs of our parents and siblings. We don’t hear the yearnings of our peers to be accepted, the desire of others to be part of our sphere of friends, and the longing of many to have the same educational advantages we have.

We are called to “listen up” to the needs of those around us. To do this means not focusing solely on our own needs, but standing in the shoes of others and doing what we can to make their lives happier.

Heavenly Father, help me to “listen up” to the needs of other people both near to me and far away. Help me to understand that sometimes my lifestyle may contribute to poverty for others.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Would You Do It?” near Exodus 22:21–27 in the *CYB*.

Happy Valentine's Day!

They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full.

(Mark 8:8)

The preceding quote is from the end of the story in which Jesus feeds four thousand people. It is a good reading for Valentine's Day because it reminds us that miracles happen when people give what they have to others. Valentine's Day is a commercial celebration of love, but it is rooted in the Gospel stories where Jesus reminds us to give our love to others. Think of the people whom you love. Remember to express your love for them today in some meaningful way. Remember, too, those unknown people who influence your life in many positive ways, from the people who grow your food to the people who collect your garbage.

Dear Jesus, enable me to see beyond the commercial glitter of Valentine's Day to discover the meaning of true love. Help me to express this love in a way that shows my deep appreciation.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read "The Miniature Gospel" near Matthew 22:34–40 in the CYB.

*Blessed Are You
When You Are Excluded*

“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you.”

(Luke 6:22)

When we feel most miserable, Jesus is telling us that we are blessed. How can that be? When I am not invited to a party, when I am put down by my friends for living my faith, then I am blessed? Jesus surprises us in the Beatitudes by pointing us to what is really important. He was deserted by his friends when he was arrested. He was insulted by those who did not share his values. He basically was put to death by those who were threatened by his very presence. When and why have you felt excluded? When and why have you excluded others?

Holy Spirit, strengthen me to withstand the pain of isolation and insults. Give me the courage to never exclude or insult others.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Justice for Those Who Are Poor” near James 5:1–6 in the *CYB*.



Swallowed Up

“Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it.” . . . But Jonah set out to flee . . . from the presence of the LORD.

(Jonah 1:2–3)

In the familiar story of Jonah, Jonah is called by God to preach to the people of Nineveh, but he refuses and goes in the opposite direction. The story tells of him being swallowed by a big fish and kept in the fish’s belly for three days and three nights before being spit out upon the shore. How often have we felt God’s call in our heart? We have an inkling of some good we should be doing. We see some injustice. But we walk the other way. We don’t get involved. We don’t want to leave our comfort zone with our friends, our things, our lifestyle. Will it take something dramatic for God to get our attention?

Dear Jesus, empower me to respond to the things you challenge me to do in my life. Give me courage to be a sign of your presence.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Jesus and Jonah” near Jonah 2:2–10 in the *CYB*.

God, Answer My Prayer

“Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.”

(Matthew 7:7)

Matthew's Gospel makes it clear that if we pray, our prayers will be answered. But that is not always our experience. We prayed that we would ace an exam, that someone dear to us would be cured of cancer, that an out-of-work parent would quickly find a job—and none of it happened. God answers our prayers, but not always as we would like. In God's wisdom, sometimes what we are asking for is not the best thing for us. Or God's ability to answer may be dependent on the cooperation of other people. We must never stop asking God for what we need, but we must also trust that God will be with us through good times and bad times.

Heavenly Father, help me to understand that even when I do not get what I pray for, you are still with me, empowering me to be your faithful servant.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Supernatural Resources” near Wisdom of Solomon 19:22 in the *CYB*.



Never Too Late

Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord GOD, and not rather that they should turn from their ways and live?

(Ezekiel 18:23)

Some people think God takes pleasure when we mess up. However, Ezekiel makes it clear that God rejoices when people who have been doing evil clean up their act and remain faithful to God. In fact, Ezekiel goes so far as to say that God forgets all the bad things the person has done (see 18:22). Sin tends to paralyze people. They feel badly because they have done wrong, but they are tempted to wallow in their sin and they have no energy to begin again. But God's grace is always there prompting people to move forward, enabling them to seek forgiveness and begin again.

Dear Jesus, when I sin I'm tempted to give up and even to get bogged down in more sin. Help me to realize your presence and your love for me. Forgive me for my lack of trust in you.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read "Individuals Are Responsible for Their Behavior!" near Ezekiel 18:1–32 in the *CYB*.

Jealousy

While they were at Hazeroth, Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, . . . and they said, “Has the LORD spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?”

(Numbers 12:1–2)

Miriam and Aaron had two problems. First, they were clearly jealous of their brother, Moses. Second, they were gossiping about Moses and criticizing him because he had married a foreign woman. But those problems were all connected. It's easy to look for fault and make unfounded judgments about someone of whom we are jealous. In fact, that's one of the primary signs of jealousy. When have you been witness to or participated in such behavior? What can you do to change that behavior?

Dear Jesus, I want to be happy for the good fortune and gifts of others, but sometimes I fail and feel jealous. Help me to overcome such feelings and to not participate in gossip and criticism.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “The Jealousy of Miriam and Aaron” near Numbers, chapter 12 in the *CYB*.

What Do You See?

Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

(Matthew 17:7–8)

This scripture passage is at the end of the story in which Jesus is transformed—his clothes and body becoming radiant as light. The disciples were awed in seeing Jesus as his heavenly Father saw him. They had new insights into his relationship with God. If we can see through God’s eyes in our daily relationships, we might also understand things differently. A sibling who is always borrowing your “stuff” can irritate you. But you can also see the situation transformed, recognizing that your sibling looks up to you and wants to be like you.

Holy Spirit, help me to see the things in my life transformed through God’s eyes and to respond with new understanding.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “The Transfiguration” near Matthew 17:1–13 in the *CYB*.

Stop Judging

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.”

(Luke 6:36–37)

How easy it is to judge others. The criteria we often use include looks, dress, academic achievement, personality, athletic skill, and so on. We come to shallow decisions about who is in and who is out. We disassociate from those who do not wear designer clothes or who are overweight. Judging and condemning others is not the good news of the Gospel. Reaching out to those who seem to be excluded, partnering with those who have a hard time in school, and fostering an inclusive spirit are ways to practice God's acceptance.

How are you judgmental of others? What secret or obvious prejudices do you carry in your heart or act out in your choice of those you associate with?

- ▶ To go deeper: Read Luke 6:37–42 and think about how it applies to your life.

*Don't
Lord It Over Others!*

Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock.
(1 Peter 5:3)

Jesus asked Peter to be the first leader of the community that came to be known as the Church. In this letter attributed to Saint Peter, he gives other leaders the advice not to “lord [their leadership] over” others. True Christian leaders do not act out of pride and arrogance, but out of service and humility.

Today we might not be assigned a flock as such, but we each have groups of people with whom we relate. Lording our knowledge or position over others will not witness to them the love of Christ. But working with others, listening, caring, and taking responsibility are all ways to witness to true Christian leadership.

Dear Jesus, help me to exercise true Christian leadership. Assist me in making my life one that reflects your values and inspires others to follow you.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Living Gospel Values Even if It Demands Suffering” near 1 Peter 3:8–15 in the *CYB*.

Having an Awful Day

Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am
in distress;
my eye wastes away from grief,
my soul and body also.

(Psalm 31:9)

Each of us has bad days. Sometimes we cannot even talk about what made our day go so badly. At other times we know why we are so miserable. It could be the test we failed, the free throw we missed that caused our team to lose the tournament, the invitation we did not get, an argument with a parent or a friend. The psalmist, David, had those same experiences. In the psalm he acknowledges his misery and despair and asks God to look graciously on him. God does not take away the pain and anguish, but God makes his presence known and helps David see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Heavenly Father, when I am down and feel on the brink of despair, give me strength to see your light in my life.

► To go deeper: Read all of Psalm 31.

Rooted in God

Blessed are those who trust in the
Lord,

.....
They shall be like a tree planted by
water,

.....
It shall not fear when heat comes,
.....
and it does not cease to bear fruit.

(Jeremiah 17:7–8)

Jeremiah is reminding us that we need to be rooted in God to be able to endure the many disappointments, sufferings, and hardships of life. Being rooted in God gives us the strength and endurance to weather the storms that come our way. To be rooted in God, we need to make a conscious effort to reflect on God's presence in our lives, pray for God's guidance, and act in a way that reflects Christ's values and teachings. To be rooted in God also means to be connected to the Body of Christ, the Church.

Holy Spirit, help me to be rooted in God through my prayer, the sacraments, and my involvement in the Church. Remind me daily that Jesus Christ is my friend and savior.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Children and Green Trees” near Jeremiah 17:1–3 in the *CYB*.

Don't Be a Hypocrite!

“So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others.”

(Matthew 6:2)

No one appreciates someone who is always bragging about his or her accomplishments. The most effective way to serve others is quietly, so no one knows who did what good deed. Many people give anonymous gifts so they will not be the center of attention. Yet it is tempting to be boastful about all we have done and accomplished. But Jesus' point is that the true motivation for our generosity should be to please God, not to impress other people. For in truth, in giving to others, we are only giving back to God what God has first given us.

Heavenly Father, you have given me many gifts, and I want to use them for your glory. Strengthen me to use what I have for others in a quiet, respectful way.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Sacrificial Giving” near Mark 12:41–44 in the CYB.

Stop Comparing

“Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.”

(Luke 15:31–32)

Jesus, in the parable of the prodigal son, reminds us that celebration is called for when a sinner mends her or his ways. Yet the faithful son objected to his father’s lavish celebration for the wayward son. Sometimes we share the older brother’s objection. We wonder what is so great about being sober for thirty days when we have never engaged in underage drinking. We resent the attention given to a younger sibling for succeeding in a difficult task when we never had any trouble doing the same thing. At those times it is good to remind ourselves that we seem to have an extra “gene” for self-righteousness.

Dear Jesus, help me to rejoice when others succeed at something I find very easy. Empower me to understand all the challenges with an open heart and mind.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “God’s Limitless Love” near Luke 15:11–32 in the *CYB*.

Do the Unexpected

“How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?”

(John 4:9)

In the story of the woman at the well, Jesus breaks with the mores of his time and talks to a Samaritan woman. Jews did not associate with Samaritans. Men did not talk to women in public. Jesus's perspective was different. He saw all people as equally loved by God. In our time we live in a culture of discrimination that is not altogether different from Jesus's time. In school cafeterias we see people sitting in groups where others do not feel welcome. At work we hear racial slurs. We see people harassed because of their ethnic background. It is hard to break down those barriers, but it can be done—one person at a time.

Dear Jesus, give me the courage to reach out to people who are discriminated against. Let me learn from them so that I can see them from your perspective—as loved by God.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Why Are the Disciples Surprised?” near John 4:1–42 in the CYB.

Leave Everything?

After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up, left everything, and followed him.

(Luke 5:27–28)

But how can we leave everything? our friends? our family? our future? When Jesus calls us to leave everything, he is calling us to make sacrifices and set priorities. If our friends lead us to discount the values and commandments of Jesus, we are to leave them. The call to follow Jesus is a call to make sure the commandments of Jesus—to love God and neighbor—are what rule our lives, not other people, not materialism, and not secular culture. Jesus asks us not to get immersed in the places, people, and events of the world so that we forget what we are really about.

Dear Jesus, I do want to follow you. Inspire me to be a faithful disciple, to leave everything that is taking me away from your mission to build a more just world.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Here I Am, Lord!” near Isaiah 6:1–13 in the CYB.

Top Priority

“It is written,
‘Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him.’”

(Luke 4:8)

We are often tempted to make something or someone other than God the focus of our lives. Sometimes we live for material things—designer clothes, a sports car, the latest in technology. At other times our total attention is centered on other people—our peers or a special friend. We live and breathe what others are doing and what we will do with them. God wants us to have friends and the material things we need to sustain our life; those are blessings from God. But when things and people become the center of all our energies, we have made them our “gods.”

Holy Spirit, in a world that is permeated with materialism and consumerism, give me the gift of right judgment to help me not be swept up in acquiring more and more things.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Free . . . to Be Tempted” near Luke 4:1–13 in the *CYB*.

You Are Holy

Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

(Leviticus 19:2)

God is holy. You are created by God and in the image of God. You are baptized into the life of Christ. These things also make you holy. But what do you need to do to continue to live as a holy person? Holy people continue to grow in their faith, and their faith makes a difference in how they live their lives. Part of how we do this is by continuing to learn about our faith and participating in the great gifts of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. In that way we become a fuller part of a community that walks in faith each day.

Thank you, Creator God, for making me in your image. I will try, today and all during this Lent, to remind myself every day that you created me to be a holy person.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “The Covenant Laws” near Leviticus, chapter 2 in the *CYB*.

A Beautiful Vision

For as the rain and the snow come
down from heaven,
and do not return there until they
have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread
to the eater.

(Isaiah 55:10)

Isaiah describes a world in which no sin or injustice or unkindness exists, a world in which people truly care for one another. That is hard to imagine some days when we look around at our world. But each of us can do something in our own corner of the world to make this vision a reality. Your words and actions can be like the rain that brings goodness to the soil. You can help make Isaiah's beautiful vision a bit more real.

Dear Jesus, help me to be your hands and feet in bringing about your vision for the world—a world in which people love each other to the fullest and do not sin.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “The Optimism of Third Isaiah” near Isaiah, chapter 56 in the *CYB*.

Saint Katherine Drexel

“Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the LORD your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.”

(Deuteronomy 31:6)

Saint Katherine Drexel certainly didn't think of herself as strong and bold when she was your age. Growing up in a wealthy Philadelphia family, she was interested in getting her ears pierced and in her family's private railroad car. But her mother fed poor people several times a week and her father prayed a half hour each day. Before her life ended, Katherine had given up her millions of dollars and begun schools for Native Americans and African Americans, including Xavier University in New Orleans.

What practices do you see in your family and friends that respond to the needs of poor people? What practices do you see that develop a deeper relationship with God?

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “A Prayer Against Prejudice” near Joshua, chapter 2 in the *CYB*.

Saint Casimir

Those who are wise understand these things;
those who are discerning know them.

For the ways of the LORD are right,
and the upright walk in them,
but transgressors stumble in them.

(Hosea 14:9)

A teenager leading an army? That is part of the life story of Saint Casimir. He became a conscientious objector after seeing how poorly his soldiers were treated. A serious and prayerful young man, he decided never again to be involved in war, and was punished by his father for this with three months' confinement. Though he reigned briefly as ruler of Poland, he died at the age of twenty-three of lung trouble. This young man is the patron saint of two countries: Poland and Lithuania.

God of all graces, help me, like Casimir, to have the courage to live out my convictions even when others scorn me. Help me, like this young saint, to stay close to you in prayer.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Nonviolent Resistance” near 2 Maccabees, chapter 8 in the *CYB*.

Pray for My Enemies?

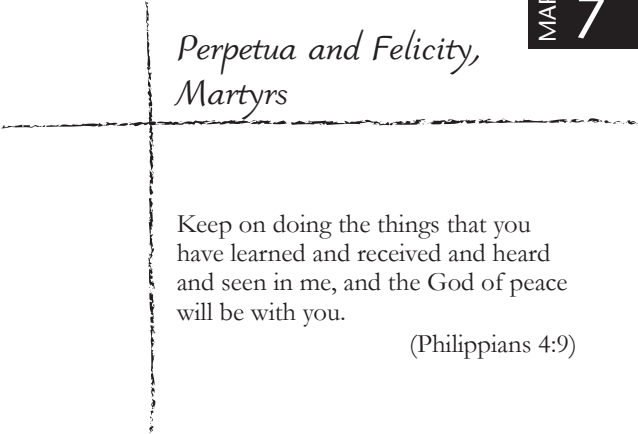
“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.”

(Matthew 5:43–45)

This is sure a hard saying! Love my enemies? When I look at those who gossip about me, exclude me, make fun of me, or worse, I know that Jesus was calling special people to be his followers because it isn't easy to love our enemies. I also know that Christ is with me today, helping me to live this hard saying. I need only ask for Christ's help.

God who loves all of us, sinners and saints, be with me today as I try to make a special effort to live these words of Jesus's. Help me at least to pray for those whom I resent, dislike, or even hate.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Christians and Revenge” near Matthew 5:38–48 in the *CYB*.



*Perpetua and Felicity,
Martyrs*

Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

(Philippians 4:9)

Saint Paul urged the Philippians not to worry over the things that make us anxious, but rather to rejoice and let God's peace fill us. Two early Christian women, Perpetua and her slave Felicity, are the ultimate examples of that attitude. Even though Perpetua had recently given birth and Felicity was pregnant, they went to prison rather than say they weren't Christians. Perpetua's father begged them to lie rather than go through such suffering as they did. Eventually they were beheaded at the public games. They went to the amphitheater joyfully, knowing they were on their way to heaven.

Dear Jesus, grant me the gift of being joyful in all circumstances, confident that you are in control of my ultimate destiny no matter what happens to me.

► To go deeper: Read Philippians 4:4–14.

It's Not Always Easy

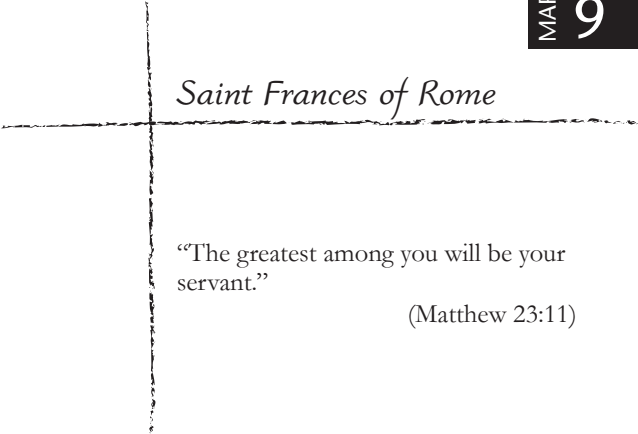
“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you.”

(Luke 6:37–38)

For some people this may be the most difficult part of Jesus's message. It seems to be part of our human nature to judge others, to gossip and criticize, and even to condemn people we don't like or with whom we disagree. And how very hard it can be to forgive! But just because these are hard sayings, it doesn't mean we are excused from trying to follow them.

O God of infinite forgiveness, I will try again to forgive even after I fail to do so. I know you are pleased with my efforts to be a forgiving person, even if they are imperfect at times.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “The Reunion Dinner” near Luke 7:1–10 in the CYB.



Saint Frances of Rome

“The greatest among you will be your servant.”

(Matthew 23:11)

Saint Frances, a wealthy young woman, had many responsibilities as a wife and mother. But when the plague struck Rome, she used all her money and sold her possessions to buy whatever the sick needed. In its cruelty the sickness killed two of her six children. Afterward this laywoman continued serving the poor for the rest of her life and even started a special community of women devoted to her cause.

It is clear that Frances was a servant. She didn't start with anything too dramatic, just visiting people in hospitals. So don't think you have to be a servant in dramatic ways and therefore miss the opportunities around you.

In what ways are you able to be of service to other people? To whom else in your life could you be of service?

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “Introducing Phoebe and Junia” near Romans 16:1–16 in the *CYB*.

You Want What from Me?

[Jesus] said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.”

(Matthew 20:21)

Wow, what a favor “Mrs. Zebedee” wanted! Truly she didn’t realize what she was asking. But Jesus listened kindly and patiently, and then explained what her favor meant and why he couldn’t give her what she wanted. His response is a good model for us when someone wants something from us. No matter how outrageous the favor might be, try to stop and remember how Jesus treated the mother of these friends of his when she asked an impossible favor.

Dear Jesus, I want to remember to listen patiently to the person who wants something from me even if I think it’s unreasonable. Let me remember how you treated the mother of your friends.

- ▶ To go deeper: Read “True Greatness” near Matthew 20:20–28 in the *CYB*.