



Impact

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.

July, 2019 This month's readings ask us to reflect on the place of God in our hearts and lives. Where our people's understanding of love may be influenced by movies, television, and articles on the internet as much or more than by the Gospel, we have a great opportunity to invite them to ponder the ways God's love may make a difference in their lives, and through them, the lives of others. May you be filled with the warmth of the sun and of God's love in these summer weeks of Ordinary Time.

— Leisa Anslinger

Homily Connections

July 7: Today's readings speak of the power of God's love and our call to share the news of this love. In today's gospel, Jesus sends people ahead of him. They are told to extend God's peace, healing and proclaiming God's kingdom to all who will hear.

Connecting with everyday life: Christ has called us to share the news of God's love, too. Are we ready to extend God's peace, healing, and mercy to those whose hearts may be open? Are we prepared to trust that God will provide what we need as we show and share God's love with all who are in need of it? Invite your people to think about those in their lives who most need to know of God's love - someone who is ill, is not affiliated with a faith community, someone with whom they are in conflict. Challenge them to see themselves as one of those who are sent out to proclaim the kingdom of God through their words and actions.

July 14: Love God, love neighbor. This is our true vocation. This command of love is not something external, put upon us as a burden, but rather is within us through the abiding presence of God. In today's gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate the sort of merciful love we are called to share with others, particularly those in need, as a reflection of the lavish love of God for us.

Connecting with everyday life: Consider telling the story of the Good Samaritan through a contemporary example. Jesus' parable is challenging today as it was for those who heard him respond to the scholar. Ask your people "who is your neighbor?" This question seems particularly poignant at present, with migrants and refugees, homeless people, and many who are addicted to opioids and other drugs in our neighborhoods. Invite your people to see their neighbor in need and to be a good neighbor. (Top article, page 2)

July 21: Abraham stopped what he was doing and encountered the Lord. St. Paul turned his life toward Christ and brought others to the Lord through his proclamation. Martha found it difficult to pause, even with Jesus in her home, in her midst. Mary "chose the better part." Today's readings ask us to reflect on the place God has in our hearts and lives.

Connecting with everyday life: Most of us can relate to Martha. It might be more challenging to relate to Mary, who stopped everything in order to listen to Jesus. Use the article on page 1 to guide your reflection. Ask your people to reflect on what makes them anxious, worried, or burdened, and to be assured that Jesus wants to be with them, and wants to be with them at the center of their lives.

July 28: As we conclude this month with so many reflections on God's love, today we are given powerful lessons in persistence in prayer.

Connecting with everyday life: Many Catholics express difficulty in knowing how to pray. Most can relate to the disciples who asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. Today, invite your people to turn to God with an open and prayerful spirit. You might lead them in a brief guided reflection, or invite them to set aside time for prayer each day in the coming week. Perhaps share this quote from C.S. Lewis with them: “I pray because I’m helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn’t change God. It changes me.” (Bottom article, page 2)

At Parish Meetings or in Adult Faith Formation this Month

Opening Prayer

Compassionate and loving God,
we seek your will in our lives,
knowing that you will never ask more than we can give,
and will give us strength in dedication and resolve to act.

May we love you always
with all our heart, all our being, all our strength, all our mind,
and may we love our neighbor as ourselves, as a sign of your love
in and for our world.

We make this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son who is one with you and the Holy Spirit. Now and forever. Amen.

Listen to Sacred Scripture: Lk 10: 38-42 or Lk 10:25-37

Read: Invite group members to select the gospel and related article

Share: your thoughts, using these questions to guide your reflection:

What does it mean to you to love God and neighbor? What helps you to keep Christ at the center of your life?

Commit: Use Impact this Month to guide your reflection and commitment in faith and action.

Offer one another a sign of Christ's peace.

Listen to Jesus.

Choose the better part

I must admit the gospel story of Martha and Mary has often bothered me. I hear the beginning of the gospel and think to myself, “here we go again...” and wonder how Jesus could be so curt with Martha. She was, after all, doing what was expected, trying to be a good host to Jesus and the disciples during their visit. There were surely meals to be prepared, water to gather from the town well, service to be offered. Mary doesn’t seem concerned about any of this. She sits at Jesus’ feet and leaves Martha to serve their guests.

In reading the gospel recently, I found myself hearing Jesus’ words to Martha differently, however. “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing.” Perhaps Jesus is expressing care for Martha - she is “anxious and worried.” Jesus is trying to tell her to slow down and pay attention to what really matters - him!

It is easy to become consumed by the many things we have to accomplish, children to care for, elderly family members who need help, responsibilities at work, there is so much to be done. Even service at our parish or in our local city can weigh on us, leaving us anxious and worried. Without thinking about it, we lose sight of the most important thing — our relationship with God, faith in Jesus, and trust in the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ words to Martha express his care for her, and for each of us. He is ready to be with us and wants us to be with him, *especially* when we are burdened.

Martha and Mary were among the first followers of Jesus. And while Mary no doubt learned from Jesus that day as she sat at his feet and listened to him, Martha surely learned as well, as Jesus drew her in and reminded her of what is most important. Through this gospel passage, we are also reminded to “choose the better part.” It is only in remaining centered on the Lord that the many activities of our lives have meaning.

What makes you anxious or worried today? Listen to Jesus. You have need of only one thing. Choose the better part. — Leisa Anslinger

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See and be

Who is your neighbor?

Jesus’ parable of the Samaritan who came to the aid of the man who was robbed and left half-dead on the side of the road has enduring power. So much so that the “good Samaritan” is synonymous with one who cares for others without expecting accolades or expressions of gratitude. And yet, we may miss the meaning of the parable because it is so familiar, or fail to take its meaning to heart because it is so challenging to do so.

When Jesus responded to the scholar who wished to trick him, he teaches us what it means to see our neighbor through the heart of God. He exposes the hypocrisy of the religious leaders whose concern for the letter of the law overrode their concern for the injured man and the compassion at the heart of the law. In placing the Samaritan as the one who was neighbor to the victim, Jesus challenges the social prejudices of the time. Samaritans and Jews held each other in contempt, yet this Samaritan not only cared for the victim, he reflected God’s love through his lavish expression of compassion and mercy. The one who was hated became the one revered and respected. Those who observed the law as a series of requirements to check off their list had missed the point.

We must see our neighbors in need and must be good neighbors to them. This is what people who love God do. This is how we are called to live. St. Benedicta of the Cross (St. Edith Stein) who died in the gas chamber at Auschwitz said, “For the Christian, there is no such thing as a ‘stranger.’ *There is only the neighbor.*”

Who is your neighbor? Are there individuals or people of a particular ethnic or social group that you avoid, hold at arms length or judge with contempt? How are you called to the love and service that is at the heart of Christ’s message? Who waits for your compassion, acceptance, selfless sharing, or attention? ©Catholic Life and Faith, 2019

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

- Lk 10:25-27

Be prepared when you pray

I once overheard a parent ask her son, just home from a raucous spring break trip, how his vacation was. He responded, “you shouldn’t ask questions you are not prepared to hear the answer to.” The conversation moved on to a different topic.

When we pray for something, are we prepared to hear the answer? I don’t mean the answers we’ve prepared for ourselves. Anne Lamott famously quipped that “you can safely assume you’ve created God in your own image when God hates all the same people you do.” Similarly, we can safely assume that we’re forcing God’s hand when God has the same remedy, response, or reaction to our prayer as we do. If your prayer is, “please let me win the lottery,” then you’re not doing it right.

When we really pray, we place our needs, cares, and anxieties before God. We open ourselves and ask for help. We listen; we don’t dictate. In doing so, we place our trust in God, knowing that God’s response to our prayer is the right response, even if we aren’t comfortable with it. For all of the challenges that prayer sometimes presents - it’s too hard, it’s too boring, I don’t have time, etc. - I think this is the real hurdle. I don’t get to control the outcome. I don’t get to manipulate the response. If I ask the question, I’ve got to be prepared to hear the answer.

— Matt Reichert is the Co-Director of the One Call Institute and lives in Richmond, MN with his wife, Theresa and their four daughters.

Impact this month

Turn to the Lord in prayer.

Call to mind any situation or circumstance that makes you anxious, worried, or burdens you.

Read Lk 10:38-42 and reflect on the gospel of Jesus, Martha, and Mary. Like Martha, bring your needs to the Lord honestly and without reserve. Like Mary, place your trust in God and listen to him.

Invite God to console you, enlighten your heart, and fill you with peace.

Read Lk 10:25-37 and ponder what it means to love God with all your heart, being, strength, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself. Reflect on the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Ask God to guide your life and actions, especially in relationship to those who most need love, care, and mercy.

Make a renewed commitment to put God at the center of your life and to serve with joy and gladness.