



Impact

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.

November, 2019 The month of November is often filled with activity in the parish as well as in the other aspects of our lives. “Black Friday” and “the Christmas season” advertisements will be plentiful, as will reminders of the days, count them, days, to Christmas. Maintaining attention on the presence of God and the call of Christ can be challenging this month. Still, November holds promise, as we celebrate All Saints and All Souls days, gather for Sunday Mass, and join with family and friends for Thanksgiving. This month’s issue of Impact invites people to become more readily aware of the many blessings in their lives, to make Christ’s presence known through their stewardship of their life, gifts, and resources, and to spread Christ’s kingdom of truth and life, holiness and grace, justice, love, and peace. May your November be blessed with every good gift, Leisa Anslinger

Homily Connections

November 3: Today’s readings offer a striking proclamation of God’s goodness and mercy.

Connecting with everyday life: Today’s gospel provides a wonderful opportunity to invite your people to place themselves in the scene of the gospel narrative. What would it be like to see Zacchaeus climb the tree, to hear Jesus call to him, to witness the mumbling among people in the crowd, to be Zacchaeus who experienced God’s mercy so powerfully that he was compelled to show mercy himself? Put yourself in the heart of the story. What experience of God’s mercy comes to mind that you might share with your people? Ask them to recognize God’s grace and mercy and to share mercy with others. (Page 1)

November 10: Today’s readings urge us to remain strong in faith, knowing that God is God of the living.

Connecting with everyday life: While today’s readings take some careful explanation, the message is clear: God is alive and active in our lives, ready to strengthen us to live as people of faith who stay focused on God’s higher purposes for our lives. Ask your people to consider the extent to which they are ready to allow faith to influence their lives. Share a time when you faced a moral or ethical dilemma, or simply a difficult choice or decision in which living faithfully was a challenge. How did you experience God’s strength and consoling peace? Assure your people that God will not abandon them in such times. (Page 2, bottom)

November 17: Today’s readings ask us to place our trust in God in every circumstance of life.

Connecting with everyday life: It can sometimes feel as though Jesus is speaking directly to us. Today may be one of those days, as he speaks of nation rising against nation, earthquakes, famine, and plagues. Some are persecuted because of their faith in Jesus — and all of us must be ready to live faith boldly. Lead your people to hear Jesus’ final words in today’s gospel: “You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives.” Ultimately, we live for God and for eternal life with him. Remind your people of this today. (Page 2)

November 24: Today marks the end of the liturgical year and the Solemnity of Christ the King.

Connecting with everyday life: The reflections on Page 2 may be good beginning points for your reflection as you prepare your homily for today.

At Parish Meetings or in Adult Faith Formation this Month

Opening Prayer

Good and gracious God, you are the source of every good gift, of all we are and have and will be. We give you thanks this day for the abundant blessings of life, faith, family, and friends, for the beauty of creation and all that reminds us of your goodness. Open our hearts to perceive your grace in our midst, our minds to learn and know your truth, and our hands to share your loving presence in the world. Guide us as we commit ourselves to living as good and faithful stewards of the many gifts you have given us. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, through the working of the Holy Spirit. One God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Listen to Sacred Scripture: Use the gospel passage of the Sunday prior to or following your gathering.

Read: Read the article on page 1.

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

For what are you grateful? What is your grateful response to the abundant blessings you have been given?

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

Offer one another a sign of Christ's peace.

Choose abundance.

This isn't a simple glass-half-empty or glass-half-full sort of thing. Many of us have been taught to think about life through a lens of *scarcity*: What is missing? What needs fixing? An attitude of gratitude leads us to look at life instead through a perspective of *abundance*. We see that each day and all that surrounds us is a gift from God, and grow in our desire to share with others out of gratitude for our many blessings.

Make choosing abundance over scarcity a habit.

It is easy to get caught up in our daily routines and activities and lose sight of God's grace and abundance in our midst. People who study the formation of habits tell us that it helps to prompt ourselves to remember what we are trying to make part of life. Following the prompt, practice the behavior, and then pay attention to the difference the habit makes in order for it to stick.

Prompt: Set a timer on your phone or smart device periodically throughout the day to call yourself to a moment of gratitude.

Practice: Begin the day with a prayer of gratitude. Express thanksgiving at meals. End the day by noticing the many times you were blessed.

Pay attention: Ask God to guide your heart and life, so that you will develop a grateful heart. Out of gratitude, share your time and resources more readily with others.

At first, this may seem awkward or forced. Stick with it! You'll soon recognize God's abundant grace beyond what you are able to comprehend. Such a grateful life does take practice. It is sure to have lasting impact, so that your life will be full and overflowing with abundance!

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A thanksgiving reflection and prayer

"To be grateful is to recognize the Love of God in everything he has given us – and He has given us everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of His love, every moment of existence is a grace, for it brings with it immense graces from Him. Gratitude therefore takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and to praise of the goodness of God. For the grateful person knows that God is good, not by hearsay but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference." - Thomas Merton

Good and gracious God, you are the source of every good gift, of all we are and have and will be. We give you thanks this day for the abundant blessings of life, faith, family, and friends, for the beauty of creation and all that reminds us of your goodness. Open our hearts to perceive your grace in our midst, our minds to learn and know your truth, and our hands to share your loving presence in the world. Guide us as we commit ourselves to living as good and faithful stewards of the many gifts you have given us. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, through the working of the Holy Spirit. One God, for ever and ever. Amen.

See the invisible with your very own eyes

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible.” - Col 1:15

When was the last time you saw God in your midst? This might seem a foolish question. God is invisible, right? In faith, we believe God is always with us, and find reassurance and consolation in being assured of God’s presence. Yet, as wonderful as this assurance is, there is more we must consider.

Each of us is created in God’s image. We have been blessed with life, faith, relationships, gifts and talents, the beauty of creation, and so much more.

When we become attentive to the blessings in our lives, we perceive God’s grace in our midst. We see the evidence of God within and around us. This awareness changes us. We become thankful people. As we grow in gratitude for these abundant blessings, we recognize our call to steward these many blessings well — to make them fruitful by nurturing, tending, and sharing them. When we do this, we live as God desires and give glory to God, the giver of the abundant blessings. Still there is more.

Jesus is the image of the invisible God. Jesus perfectly shows us who God is and how God desires us to live.

As Christian disciples, we are called to become more Christ-like with each day of our lives. When we reflect on all we know about Jesus and his way of life, we understand that Jesus’ way is about giving, of putting others, especially those most in need, first. Jesus’ way is the way of self-giving, sacrificial love.

“Jesus is the supreme teacher of Christian stewardship as he is of every other aspect of Christian life; and in Jesus’ teaching and life self-emptying is fundamental. Now, it might seem that self-emptying has little to do with stewardship, but in Jesus’ case that is not so. His self-emptying is not sterile self-denial for its own sake; rather in setting aside self, he is filled with the Father’s will, and he is fulfilled in just this way: “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work.” (Jn 4:34).” (SDR, p. 19) Still there is more.

We have been baptized into Christ’s very life. Jesus tells us that when we reach out to the least ones among us, we are reaching out to him. St. Mother Teresa spoke often of seeing in the poorest of the poor whom she selflessly served the face of Christ in “distressing disguise.”

When do you see God in your midst? Look around you. God is there — in the abundant blessings of life, the faces of family and friends and the least ones. Still there is more.

As a member of Christ’s body, you are called to make the invisible visible through your caring and sharing, your stewardship of life, gifts, and resources. As you do so, you will see the invisible with your very own eyes! ©Catholic Life and Faith, 2019