

Priesthood Sunday

October 25, 2009

Three simple catechetical lessons for any age group based on this Sunday's Scripture readings

Lesson One – Gospel

Reading: Mark 10-46-52

Theme: How Do I Hear God's Voice?

Objective: To help students understand that our faith helps us to hear God's call in many ways.

Reflection: Every priest is called to serve God's people in word and deed. God's call to serve God can come in many different shapes and sizes and from many different directions. Many times we hear God's call through other people who encourage or discourage us from paying attention to God's voice. Our culture is filled with many competing voices demanding our attention from individual peer pressure to multi media, communication and commercial conglomerates. As a faith community we have a special obligation to help each other hear and discern God's invitation in our lives. Just as Bartimaeus' faith and desire to encounter Jesus healed his sight, so we too can open our eyes and ears to hear God's voice in our lives and promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

News Report

Do a dramatic reading of the Gospel by dividing the text into three parts: Narrator, crowd, Bartimaeus and Jesus. Have the student assume the roles and act out the Gospel passage.

After the reading appoint another student to act as a first century news reporter doing an interview for the Jerusalem TV station WJER. Have the student reporter ask questions of the readers for that evening's news cast.

1. To the Crowd – Why did you want silence this blind man from reaching Jesus? Were you surprised by Jesus' healing? After witnessing this miracle are you willing to follow Jesus? Why or Why not?

To Bartimaeus – What caused you to want to reach Jesus? Did you actually think he would cure you of your blindness? How long are you willing to follow Jesus not that you can see?

To Jesus – What moved you to stop and talk to this beggar? Are you willing to help anyone who seeks you out with a problem or need? How can we contact you? Is there anything else you would like to add?

2. To the class – If Jesus were present with us today, what would you want from him? How do you hear the voice of Jesus calling you today? (Through other people, prayer, injustice, media, etc.) In what ways are we blind or deaf to the call of Jesus? What other voices, influences, temptations make it difficult to hear or see Jesus today? Do you think Bartimaeus would make a good priest in today's world? Why or why not?

In general – How can our priests/religious help us to focus more clearly on the call of Jesus to serve in today's world? What kind of healing(s) is necessary to help us see the presence of Christ in our world? How are we an advocate for the poor and needy in our local community? Do we avoid or respond to the call of Christ to create a more just society?

Church Tour

(Get permission from you principal, DRE or pastor before you try this one.)

Divide your class into pairs and blindfold one of the partners (like blind Bartimaeus). Carefully lead the students into church (in a trust walk fashion) and seat them in various parts of the building. Have the student leader describe in detail to their blindfolded partner the sanctuary, the altar, the ambo, baptismal font, tabernacle, stations of the cross etc.

After each brief description have each blindfolded person repeat what they heard to see how much they were able to remember or comprehend. When finished remove the blindfold and share reactions.

If time permits, invite the students around the altar and explain role of your parish priest as presider of the Sunday worship.

If possible have your pastor come in and give the students a short tour of the worship space and explain the various aspects and parts of the Mass.

Finally, if your pastor is agreeable, have the students ask their pastor how he heard God's call to become a priest.

Lesson Two – Second Reading

Reading: Hebrews 5: 1-6

Theme: We are a priestly people

Objective: To help students understand that God's call bestows on us a new dignity as God's people

Reflection: All baptized Christians share in the common priesthood of Christ. God's call through Baptism and Confirmation consecrates with a new dignity to the common priesthood of the faithful. Christians have a special obligation to serve others by using their gifts and talents in sacrificial giving of time and talent. The ordained priest plays a special role as a living witness of sacrificial service to the community of believers and as the primary celebrant at the sacrifice of the Mass. Just as Melchizedek and Aaron were chosen from the community to offer sacrifice by God, we too are called to give ourselves in service to others. We can look to our priests as a role model for this service.

Activities:

1. Who is Melchizedek?

Pass out bibles and have students read Genesis 14: 17-20. This short passage recounts Abrams return from victory over Chedorlaomer and his encounter with Melchizedek, king and priest of Salem.

Break the class into small groups and have them answer the following questions.

Why was Melchizedek making this offering?

What was he thankful for?

Who actually got credit for their victory?

How did Abram respond?

What similarities are there between Melchizedek's offering and our offering at Sunday Mass? (E.g. bread and wine)

Who is the offering being made to?

Remind the students that just as Abram responded to God's call we too should be open to the voice of God in our lives.

Just as Melchizedek offered bread and wine in thanksgiving so do our priests offer with us bread and wine at each Eucharistic celebration.

2. Want Ad

"Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God" (Heb. 5:1)

Have the class reflect on the role of the priest as someone taken from among the community. Divide the class into small groups and ask them to make a list of qualities they would look for in today's priest.

Have each small group report on their list of qualities. Then if time permits:

Have the small groups go back and write a want ad for their local parish outlining the job of a priest and pastor. Make sure they list what qualities they are looking for in the new priest they want to hire. They should also include working conditions, number of hours per week, salary, benefits and perks.

Have each small group read and report on their want ad to the entire class.

Bonus round

Invite your pastor (or priest) to visit your classroom and solicit his response to the student's want ads. Dialogue to see how accurate or far fetched their perception of the priest's duties is compared to reality.

Homework

Invite your students to take the want ad description home and ask their parents what they think the work of a priest entails. Have them discuss what qualities their parents expect in a priest or pastor. Have the students share what they discovered with the rest of the class.

3. Prayer service

Pass out bibles and read both Genesis 14: 17-20 and Hebrews 5:1-6.

Set up a loaf of bread and grape juice on a small table. Add a Bible or an image of Jesus.

Ask the students to write on an index card what they are most thankful for.

Invite the students to read their index card and place it on the table next to the bread and wine symbolizing their offering.

Next break the bread and re-read the Genesis passage:

“Blessed be Abram by God most high, the creator of heaven and earth; and blessed be God most high who delivered your foe into your hands.”

Distribute the bread to each student as well as the grape juice in an act of shared blessing and thanksgiving.

Conclude with a song of thanksgiving.

Lesson Three – First Reading

Reading: Jeremiah 31: 7-9

Theme: God's active presence among God's people

Objective: To help students to identify the God's faithfulness among God's people.

Reflection: God never forgets God's people, and there is great joy in God's amazing works. God has a special heart for the most vulnerable, the blind, the lame, the mother and child those who survive captivity. He offers consolation to those in sorrow and water to those who thirst. God stands by God's faithful people, the chosen ones who are God's people. Just as God's love and faithfulness brings joy and consolation to those in need, so do our pastoral leaders, our priests share in God's vision to bring mercy, and compassion to those in need. They serve our parish communities in loving service as God's faithful witnesses.

Activity: Our God is an active God who is present to us. Distribute bibles or copies of this reading to the class, and after reading through the passage ask the students to make a list of what God does for God's people

Examples:

- Delivers his people
- Brings them back
- Gathers them
- Consoles them
- Leads them

Explain to the class that the Israelites were living in exile after being conquered by the Assyrians in 721 B.C. After many years of being away they are allowed to return to their native land at the hand of God who delivers them.

Have the class reflect on contemporary people living in exile, the immigrant, the refugees from war, (Iraq, Afghanistan etc.) homeless folks searching for jobs. Discuss who helps these people with their struggles and needs? Does the Church, our leaders have a responsibility to "gather", "console", "lead" them?

Divide the class into groups of 4. Give each small group a piece of poster board, scissors and glue sticks. Begin by having each group read a part of the section from Jeremiah and put the passage into their own words for today's society. Then distribute current news magazines and have students look for words or pictures of people in need. Have them cut out words and photos and create a collage for service on their poster board. When each group is finished have them decide how their parish church (or the Diocesan church) priest, deacons and laity can help alleviate the needs of the poor by concrete actions. Have each group share their poster with the class.

Extra Credit:

Obtain a copy of the book, *Mother Theodore Guerin, a Woman for Our Time* by Penny Blaker Mitchell. Focus on Chapter 3 which describes Mother Theodore's

journey to the United States and the adversity she and her small band of sisters faced as they settled in a new land at St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN.

Have the students “brainstorm” what personal qualities Sr. Guerin needed to accomplish her mission in the 1850s. Reflect on her prayer life and how she relied on God to start a new community for the Sisters of Providence. Because of her faith and perseverance she was able to accomplish great things for the Glory of God. What qualities do our current church leaders (priests and nuns) need to carry on God’s mission in today’s world?

Have your students Google *Sr. Theodore Guerin* or visit the St. Mary-of-the-Woods web site and see what else they can learn about America’s newest saint and her interaction with early pioneer priests and bishops.

Other Credit: If time permits have each group turn the poster over and create a Deacon and Priest acronym. Have them spell out the word D-E-A-C-O-N and P-R-I-E-S-T in a column and think of a work or word that describes their role or ministry.

E.g.	D – Disciple	P – Prayer leader
	E - Evangelizer	R – Reconciler
	A – Advocate for the poor	I – Imitator of Christ
	C – Community Builder	E – Example
	O – Other minded	S – Steward
	N -	T –

Have each small group explain their acronym and what it means to the class.

More Extra Credit

1. **Romero** (For older youth Grades 7 – 12 and adult audiences)

If time allows rent a copy of the DVD Romero and show all or part of it to the class. After wards reflect on Archbishop Romero’s ministry as a bishop and how he served the poor in his Diocese of El Salvador. What caused him to face the military government and speak for the rights of the poor? How did prayer influence his spiritual life and move him to action? If he were alive today what would he say about how we treat immigrants in our country? Would Romero’s views be accepted by Catholics in the United States? Who are the prophetic voices in today’s Catholic Church?

2. **Thank you notes:**

After reflecting on today’s readings, have each student write a “thank you” note to their parish priest or pastor. Have them identify one or two qualities they admire in him. (You might also invite the class to take their notes home and email their thoughts to their priest or pastor)

3. Seminarian Visit

Contact your diocesan Vocation Director and arrange for a seminarian to visit your class room to discuss his decision to discern a vocation to the priesthood. Give each student an index card and instruct them to write one or two questions might want to ask a seminarian. Collect the questions put them in a box or hat and mix them up. Have the seminarian draw a question and read it aloud and respond as honestly as he is able. Be prepared for some interesting discussion.

4. Save Us Oh Lord

Obtain a DVD of Bob Dufford's song Save Us Oh Lord. (c. OCP Publications, Inc.) Play the song in class.

Explain that even though it is based on Psalm 80, it relates well to this Sunday's readings in that it expresses Israel's yearning for deliverance.

Divide the class into small groups and give each group a verse of the song to reflect and think about. Each group should analyze the refrain as well. Have each group put their verse into their own words and to think of concrete examples of how the words might be put into action in today's world. If time permits have the class extrapolate from the words an application to the ministry of the priesthood. Continue to relate the words and theme of the song to today's readings. Finish by singing the song. You might contact your parish music minister And request the song be sung at an upcoming liturgy. Have your students prepared to listen for the song at Mass and report back to you during a future class.