

Priesthood Sunday

October 30, 2011

31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

Lesson One – Gospel

Reading: Matthew 23: 1-12

Theme: Proper attitudes

Objective: To help students understand that our faith calls us to have a proper attitude toward our faith and religious practices.

Reflection: Every priest is called to serve God's people in word and deed. They are prepared for their ministry by understanding the importance and priority of a proper spiritual disposition. In today's Gospel Jesus reminds us that priest's are called to be servant leaders who serve the people of God with Christ centered humility.

Activity: Do a dramatic reading of the Gospel by dividing the text into three parts:

Narrator 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 students/audience for that evening's news cast.

1. What is Jesus trying to tell the scribes and Pharisees?
Do you think they really practice what they preach? How can you tell if Leader is not practicing what they ask others to do under them?
2. Do you believe that people in authority deserve more perks, like sitting at the head of a banquet table? Can you think of any other privileges that go with being in a position of leadership?
3. To Jesus – What do you mean by saying that we should “call no one Father?” Wasn't Joseph your foster father?
4. Do you think the Pharisees got the point of your answer? What

Exactly did you mean about humbling yourself to be exalted? Isn't that a contradiction?

5. To the class – Do you think the Pharisees got along with Jesus? Were they more concerned with obeying the law or caring for people? Can you think of a current example where the needs of people come before rules and traditions?
6. In general – How can our priests help us understand the idea of servant leadership? How do they understand the place of humility in their Priestly ministry?

Finally – Print out the Gospel reading and cut up 3 or 4 lines of the text so that there are 7 or 8 pieces. Divide your class into 3 or 4 small groups and give each group the 7 or 8 pieces of the Gospel story. Instruct the students to read their piece of the story then work as a small group to put it together in sequence from the first line to the last. Give the group a piece of cardboard and glue sticks. Have them arrange the story in order and glue the pieces to the cardboard. See how accurately they can remember the story line and the sequence of events. Have each small group present their story to the class. Check the Bible for accuracy.

Lesson Two – Second Reading

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 7b-9, 13

Theme: Encouragement

Objective: To help students understand the importance of persistence and encouragement in living the Gospel and practicing their faith in today's world.

Reflection: Through Baptism and Confirmation we are consecrated to the common priesthood of the faithful. Our Christian faith is not a private affair but a communal sharing of our struggles, successes, good times and bad. We are too love one another as Christ loves us and support and care for all those in need. Just as a mother nurses her new born child so we too should care for each other.

Activity: Do a little geography lesson with you class by pointing out on a map the areas of Greece, Thessalonica, Macedonia and Achaia. Explain to the class that Thessalonica was the capital of a Roman province called Macedonia. (Today an area of northern Greece) Paul spent three weeks preaching there to mainly Gentile or a non Jewish audience. Even though the Thessalonians were undergoing persecution, Paul encouraged them to stay strong in their faith.

1. Pass out index cards and ask the students to write down one quality a Christian would need to stay strong in their faith. (E.g. prayer, fortitude, good friends, community, religious icons, etc.) Collect the cards and divide the class into two groups or teams. Shuffle the index cards and starting with team # 1, read one of the “qualities” on an index card and ask the group to use the word in a sentence. (E.g. a Christian needs strong friends to remain faithful.) Award 10 points for each correct sentence. Continue the process for team # 2 and proceed back and forth until each card has been used.

Bonus Round: Return to the first card and repeat the game, only this time have each group think of a reverse quality or situation that would prohibit or deter a person from practicing their faith. (E.g. instead of prayer – computer games; instead of fortitude – laziness; etc.) This time award 20 points for each creative answer.

2. Pass out bibles and read from the final chapter of 1 Thessalonians 2: 13. St. Paul “unceasingly” gives thanks to the Thessalonians for their faith and perseverance in the practice of their faith. Explain to the class that all good things come from God who is the creator of all things.

Ask the students to reflect on what they are thankful for. Write down each item on the chalk board or large poster board. Be sure to ask them why they chose the item they did.

Near the end of class, gather your group into a prayer circle and re-read this letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians. Then create your own prayer of the faithful by reading each item the students identified previously. Have them respond “Lord Hear Our Prayer” after each one.

3. Ask your class to create a *Top 10* list of the most difficult challenges, difficulties, toils or drudgeries a person faces in living their faith in today’s world. (E.g. Greed, consumerism, Sexual permissiveness, lack of spirituality, laziness, peer pressures, etc.) Invite your pastor to visit your class and have him share the thoughts and insights of the above *Top 10 activity* with him. Ask your pastor to share a little of his own thoughts on the challenges, toils or drudgeries of being a faithful Christian and Catholic in today’s world. See how many issues he would agree with or change. Finally ask him what he is most thankful for about his ministry as priest. (1 Thess. 2:13)

Lesson Three – First Reading

Reading: Malachi 1: 14; 2: 2, 8-10

Theme: Keep God's Covenant

Objective: To help students keep God's commandments.

Reflection: God call some baptized men to serve him through the vocation of deacon or the priesthood. The Sacrament of Holy Orders ordains men to serve both as deacons or priests to serve the community faithfully and with integrity through teaching, worship and servant leadership. God calls them like us to a higher standard by word and example. In this reading God reminds us that there are consequences to our actions.

Activity: Divide the class into groups of 4. On the chalk board write the word "Covenant." Ask the group what the word covenant means. If they need help explain that it is an ancient agreement that God made with Abraham reflecting God's faithfulness to Abraham and his descendents for their continued faithfulness to God. (I will be your God and you will be my people)

Then ask the groups to write down as many of the 10 commandments they can remember in 3 – 4 minutes. When finished call time and have each group share their answers. Keep a list on the chalk board until all 10 Commandments have been identified.

Then ask the class what happens when one breaks a commandment and goes astray. (E.g. disobeys one father and mother, lies, cheats or steals) Help them understand the consequences of their actions.

Finally give each small group a piece of poster board, scissors and glue sticks. Then distribute current news magazines and have students look for words or pictures of people who have broken one of God's commandments or who suffer the consequences of their bad choices and actions. Have them cut out words and photos and create a collage of "curses" or "violations" on their poster board. When each group is finished have them explain to the larger class their collage. When finished remind that class that God expects us to do our best in keeping God's covenant and commandments.

Extra Credit

1. Movie discussion

If any of your students have seen the recent Harry Potter movie you might Lead a discussion on the lessons of good and evil and how there are consequences to the good or bad choices one makes in their lives. Explain that living a moral, good life can be a very difficult challenge in our

world. There are many forces that pull us and tempt us (like Harry Potter) into bad, evil situations. We need to remember that God is the source of all goodness and holiness in this world and the next.

2. Technology Discussion

You might also lead a discussion on the good or bad use of technology in the cyberspace world. Ask the students how the internet can be used for or bad/evil purposes. How would God expect us to use facebook or twitter. Ask the students for examples of positive and negative internet usage and the consequences of each. How does technology build up or tear down the covenant God has given to us through the commandments? Ask your priest or pastor to address these issues.

More Extra Credit

1. 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)

2. 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.

3. 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.