

Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

July—2010

The following series is **free, downloadable small-group materials** based on each week's Mass readings and taking into account the seasons of the liturgical year. Each study provides an introductory reflection on some aspect of the readings or on personal spirituality. Each of the readings is provided along with a few questions designed to engage the heart and stimulate the group's discussion. These small-group materials will be provided on a continuing basis in monthly segments.

We would suggest the following 60-to-90 minute format for the small group:

1. Open with a moment of quiet reflection and prayer.
2. Discuss the introductory reflection with a question or comment like, "What do you feel is important for us to grasp in this introduction?" or "What stood out to you from these opening paragraphs?" As the facilitator of the discussion be ready to share one or two things which were important to you from the introduction.
3. Have someone read the First Reading and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions. **Effective group-dynamic techniques should be used to further stimulate the discussion and affirm the participation.**
4. The Responsorial Psalm provides a reflective transition from the First Reading to the Gospel Reading, so have the Psalm read aloud. You may do this without additional comment, or you may want to draw their attention to something you feel is pertinent.
5. You can either read this week's Second Reading next and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions, or cover the Second Reading after you cover the Gospel Reading. The Second Reading does not always have a clear connection to the other Sunday Mass readings, **so do not feel like you need to force a connection.** However, you can provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to draw a connection by asking, "How do you see this passage tying into the theme of the readings?"
6. Move on to the Gospel Reading, repeating the process by asking several people to share their answers to the reflection questions.
7. Approximately equal time for discussion should be given to each of the sections: Introduction, First Reading, Gospel Reading, and the Second Reading. Obviously, if one section is especially stimulating, you should give some additional time to discussing it.
8. Close the discussion with group prayer, using various prayer formats.

We trust that God will use these materials to make His Word more meaningful to you, both within the small group environment and during Mass as you hear the Scripture is read and taught. **We would appreciate knowing if you are using the *Reflecting on Sunday's Readings*, and would welcome your feedback, either through the Emmaus Journey web page form, or by direct e-mail.**

Sincerely in Christ,

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Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—July 4, 2010

Introduction: Evangelization and witnessing is often a fearful prospect for many Catholics, yet it is the Christian mandate and one of the highest callings we can pursue. This week's Gospel Reading can help remove that fear by showing us that witnessing for Jesus is simply living and relating to others in such a way that they comprehend that "the Kingdom of God has come near." For many in this world that is the beginning of hope; the realization that God and his life is accessible to them. This passage from the Gospel of Luke is pregnant with principles of evangelization which when applied can remove the anxiety associated with evangelization and contribute to the effectiveness of our witness. These principles include:

METHODOLOGY—The Lord "**sent them on ahead of him, two by two.**" Evangelization always works best when it is a joint effort of two or more people. A companion in Christ reduces the stress of relating and talking to someone about Jesus and it more than doubles the creativity and wisdom that can be brought to the process of revealing the Kingdom of God to others. Having another with whom we can pray for people's conversion is very empowering. Together you can seek the Holy Spirit's intervention to soften and prepare the hearts of pre-believers so that they will be ready to welcome the Good News of God's love and Jesus' sacrifice for them.

ATTITUDE—The Lord said, "**I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.**" One reason witnessing has received such a bad rap, and causes many Catholics to shy away from it, is that we know and in many cases have experienced, the abuses of overzealous witnesses who did not have the attitude of a lamb. Lambs are gentle and meek, humble of heart if you will. It would be totally out of character for a lamb to beat the wolf, or any creature, over the head with the truth. As witnessing lambs we, with confidence, tell others the Gospel truth of which we have become certain, but we must not attempt to overpower them into the Kingdom. If we are praying for them, if we are romancing them with the loving words of truth, accompanied by a humble spirit of service, they will frequently be wooed into saying "Yes!" to Jesus' offer of redemption and union.

RELATIONSHIP—The Lord instructed them to "**remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide ... heal the sick in it ...**" Evangelization should not primarily be an onslaught of religious words and challenges but rather an incarnational dwelling among those without Christ. The witness must be willing to dwell among them as a visual aid of God's love within their environment, embracing their culture, and carrying their concerns. In this way Christ comes to dwell among people again, in the form of the witnesses who lend their bodies to Christ so that he can convey his love through them.

MOTIVE—"**Nevertheless do not rejoice in this ... rejoice that your names are written in heaven.**" There is great joy in observing someone's passage from darkness to light. We are thrilled to see someone unite with Christ with whom we have been instrumental in communicating the Gospel, yet we must not be motivated by a trophy mentality. Our relationship with Christ must be the motivating factor for all we do. It must be so meaningful to us that the reason we are witnessing is not for personal glory, but so that others might also experience the joy we know in Christ. He is our motive.

Christ desires to reach the world, beginning with *your* world and *your* witness. **It's unreasonable that a witness should have to be sent from half-way around the world, or even from across the city, to bring the Gospel to *your* neighbors or *your* acquaintances.** That is why he has you there.

First Reading — Isaiah 66:10-14

10 Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her, all you who love her; Exult, exult with her, all you who were mourning over her! 11 Oh, that you may suck fully of the milk of her comfort, That you may nurse with delight at her abundant breasts! 12 For thus says the LORD: Lo, I will spread prosperity over her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing torrent. As nurslings, you shall be carried in her arms, and fondled in her lap; 13 As a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you; in Jerusalem you shall find your comfort.

14 When you see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bodies flourish like the grass; The LORD'S power shall be known to his servants, but to his enemies, his wrath.

1. What would motivate a person to keep this good news to himself?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 66:2-7, 16, 20

2 Shout joyfully to God, all you on earth; sing of his glorious name; give him glorious praise. 3 Say to God: "How awesome your deeds! Before your great strength your enemies cringe. 4 All on earth fall in worship before you; they sing of you, sing of your name!" Selah 5 Come and see the works of God, awesome in the deeds done for us. 6 He changed the sea to dry land; through the river they passed on foot. Therefore let us rejoice in him, 7 who rules by might forever, Whose eyes are fixed upon the nations. Let no rebel rise to challenge! Selah

16 Come and hear, all you who fear God, while I recount what has been done for me. ...

20 Blessed be God, who did not refuse me the kindness I sought in prayer.

Second Reading — Galatians 6:14-18

14 But may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 For neither does circumcision mean anything, nor does uncircumcision, but only a new creation. 16 Peace and mercy be to all who follow this rule and to the Israel of God.

17 From now on, let no one make troubles for me; for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

2. What is the primary point of verse 15?
3. What are some other false standards of spirituality?
4. What are some areas of life where you have seen evidence of this "new creation" in others?

Gospel Reading — Luke 10:1-12, 17-20

1 After this the Lord appointed seventy (-two) others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. 2 He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. 3 Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. 4 Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. 5 Into whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.' 6 If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. 7 Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves his payment. Do not move about from one house to another.

8 Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, 9 cure the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God is at hand for you.' 10 Whatever town you enter and they do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, 11 'The dust of your town that clings to our feet, even that we shake off against you.' Yet know this: the kingdom of God is at hand. 12 I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day than for that town.

17 The seventy (-two) returned rejoicing, and said, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name." 18 Jesus said, "I have observed Satan fall like lightning ⁸ from the sky. 19 Behold, I have given you the power 'to tread upon serpents' and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you. 20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

5. To what extent have you recognized the appointment or calling of God to participate in evangelization?
6. What joys and/or fears do you have about sharing Christ with others who are not yet believers?
7. How do you think someone recognizes that the Kingdom of God has come near them?

The New American Bible, (Nashville, Tennessee: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) 1997.
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Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—July 11, 2010

Introduction: Some years ago I read a book that discussed the deterioration of the legal system in western society. It rightly pointed out that the majority of people in the legal profession have become more concerned with what is legal than with what is just. By way of support it pointed out how often criminals who are knowingly guilty of horrendous crimes are being set free from prosecution due to legal technicalities. Are they legally being set free? Certainly. Is it just and right that someone who is knowingly guilty does not have to account for their crime? Certainly not!

The lawyer who confronted Jesus in this week's Gospel Reading, in a similar way, was not concerned about what was just and right, but about what was legal. His question had to do with what was the legal minimum requirement necessary to get into heaven. There is a difference between what is legal and what is just and Jesus did not get trapped into playing the "legality" game. His answer provided the Scripture's legal minimum, however the Scripture's legal minimum is a broad, all encompassing, statement of heavenly justice; "*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.*"

This answer points out that the legal minimum is total surrender to loving God and loving people. So in an attempt to avoid the uncomfortable position of examining the wholeheartedness of his love, the lawyer endeavors to change the subject by asking Jesus to clarify the legality of, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus' parable about the Good Samaritan once again points out the difference between a legal definition of "my neighbor" and a just definition. Each of the participants who passed by the injured man undoubtedly could have given a legal excuse as to why they couldn't stop and render aid, but they couldn't justify their indifference. Your love for God cannot end at the steps of your neighbor, and your love for your neighbors cannot end with the exclusion of strangers. **The love of God, of which Jesus speaks, encompasses all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, and when present will of necessity overflow and touch all whom we encounter.**

Neither the lawyer, nor we, can meet the legal demands necessary to "inherit eternal life." It is beyond our capacity. So the Father provides a Sacrificial Lamb, the Lord Jesus, not primarily to meet only the legal requirement of our redemption, but rather to make "just" the nature of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Only when he redeems us, and brings about that inner change, can we love God with *all* our being. Only then will his love in us flow over into unselfish love for our neighbor. When our thinking shifts from concern about what is *necessary* as good Catholics to escape perdition and attain heaven, to what is *possible* for good Catholics to express our love through Christ, only then will we see our love for God growing and overflowing from our life to others.

"Neither of these two kinds of love is expressed with full maturity without the other, because God cannot be loved apart from our neighbor, nor our neighbor apart from God. Hence as many times as Peter was asked by our Lord if he loved him, and as he attested of his love the Lord added at the end of each response, 'Feed my sheep,' or 'feed my lambs,' as if he were clearly saying: 'There is only one adequate confirmation of wholehearted love of God—laboring steadily for the needy in your midst, exercising continuing care of them.'" (Bede in *Homilies of the Gospels*)

First Reading — Deuteronomy 30:10-14

...10 if only you heed the voice of the LORD, your God, and keep his commandments and statutes that are written in this book of the law, when you return to the LORD, your God, with all your heart and all your soul.

11 "For this command which I enjoin on you today is not too mysterious and remote for you. 12 It is not up in the sky, that you should say, 'Who will go up in the sky to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?'

13 Nor is it across the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?' 14 No, it is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts; you have only to carry it out.

1. How does this passage help define what it means to obey God?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 69:14, 17, 30-31, 33-34, 36-37 NAB)

14 But I pray to you, LORD, for the time of your favor. God, in your great kindness answer me with your constant help. ...

17 Answer me, LORD, in your generous love; in your great mercy turn to me. ...

30 But I am afflicted and in pain; let your saving help protect me, God, 31 That I may praise God's name in song and glorify it with thanksgiving. ...

33 "See, you lowly ones, and be glad; you who seek God, take heart! 34 For the LORD hears the poor, does not spurn those in bondage. ...

36 God will rescue Zion, rebuild the cities of Judah. God's servants shall dwell in the land and possess it; 37 it shall be the heritage of their descendants; those who love God's name shall dwell there.

Second Reading — Colossians 1:15-20

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross (through him), whether those on earth or those in heaven.

2. Which characteristic of Christ is the most compelling reason for you to make him pre-eminent in your life?

Gospel Reading — Luke 10:25-37

25 There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" 27 He said in reply, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." 28 He replied to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live."

29 But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. 32 Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. 33 But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. 34 He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. 35 The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.' 36 Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?" 37 He answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

3. Where do you see yourself in this encounter?

4. Which area of your life do you find is easiest to wholeheartedly love God? Which is the most difficult?

5. If a person found themselves lacking in compassion toward others, how would you suggest that they develop a compassionate heart?

Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—July 18, 2010

Introduction: For those of us who are doers, this week's Gospel Reading provides both a point of identification and a point of challenge. Many of us can see ourselves in Martha. Like her, we get up each morning with a do-list a mile long that we developed during the night as we lay abed. We are so committed to serving God and others, and need to do so with such a high standard of excellence, we hit the ground running. Mostly, we feel it is easier to do it ourselves than it is to get someone else to do it up to our standards, so the do-list never gets shorter. Though we love to serve and to do, at the same time, with a degree of self-righteous satisfaction, we are critical that others are not as committed and/or as efficient as we are. Deep in our heart we love to do, and love to do it well.

Interestingly, Jesus never condemns Martha, or us, for our commitment to work, especially work for him. What he does endeavor to do is to help us realize that when our do-list or proclivity to serve becomes excessive, starts creating anxiety in our heart, and distracts us from enjoying him, it is time to re-evaluate. And he helps us do that by telling about two wonderful, godly women, Mary and Martha his friends, who sought to serve him and his ministry.

This passage tells us nothing about Mary's proclivity to serve, or her plans for ensuring that Jesus and his disciples had something to eat when they visited her and Martha. What it does tell us is that in the midst of a busy life and a full agenda, Mary chose to come apart from her duties to spend time listening to and talking with Jesus. No doubt she was just as fully conscious of all that needed to be done as was Martha, but she undoubtedly was also conscious of how important and essential is Jesus' life and teaching.

We assume, because of Jesus' comment about Martha's "anxious and troubled" spirit that Mary was calm and peaceful in spirit. Two wonderful women, servants of God, both subjected to the same busy environment, yet with very diverse conditions of inner peace. One, Mary, who chose to set apart time to visit with Jesus, and one who did not, Martha.

Did one love him more than the other, probably not. But one understood her priorities more clearly in Jesus' opinion because she chose to listen to and talk with him. Jesus said, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*" Our inner peace is directly connected to Jesus the giver of peace, and the primary way we daily access that peace is through his presence.

Years ago, Robert Foster began challenging Christian men who were too busy to spend time in Jesus' presence through sacred Scripture and in prayer, to simply set aside "7 Minutes Alone With God." Only seven minutes, not very much time, and no one expected such a little amount of time to make a difference. It was such a little bit of time that men could hardly come up with an excuse why they couldn't find time for seven minutes. As you can guess the seven minutes of reading sacred Scripture and praying became so vital that it went from seven minutes, to fifteen, to thirty minutes, and became an anchor for their daily life and gave peace in the midst of a busy life.

"We live in a worry-filled world. We find ourselves occupied and preoccupied with many things, while at the same time feeling bored, resentful, depressed and very lonely. In the midst of this world the Son of God, Jesus Christ, appears and offers us new life, the life of the Spirit of God ... A hard struggle is required. It is the struggle to allow God's Spirit to work in us and recreate us. But this struggle is not beyond our strength. It calls for some very specific, well-planned steps. It calls for a few moments a day in the presence of God when we can listen to his voice precisely in the midst of our many concerns" (from *Making All Things New* by Henri J.M. Nouwen)

What about us, can we find a measly seven minutes each day to read the Scriptures and pray? **We, like Mary and Martha, do have the freedom of choice and can either choose each day to pause in his presence, or not to—let's choose the good portion.**

First Reading — Genesis 18:1-10

1 The LORD appeared to Abraham by the terebinth of Mamre, as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. 2 Looking up, he saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground, 3 he said: "Sir, if I may ask you this favor, please do not go on past your servant. 4 Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves under the tree. 5 Now that you have come this close to your servant, let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way." "Very well," they replied, "do as you have said." 6 Abraham hastened into the tent and told Sarah, "Quick, three seahs of fine flour! Knead it and make rolls." 7 He ran to the herd, picked out a

tender, choice steer, and gave it to a servant, who quickly prepared it. 8 Then he got some curds and milk, as well as the steer that had been prepared, and set these before them; and he waited on them under the tree while they ate.

9 "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There in the tent," he replied. 10 One of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son." Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, just behind him.

1. Why is hospitality such a vital ministry?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 15:2-5

2 Whoever walks without blame, doing what is right, speaking truth from the heart; 3 Who does not slander a neighbor, does no harm to another, never defames a friend;

4 Who disdains the wicked, but honors those who fear the LORD; Who keeps an oath despite the cost, 5 lends no money at interest, accepts no bribe against the innocent. III Whoever acts like this shall never be shaken.

Second Reading — Colossians 1:24-28

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church, 25 of which I am a minister in accordance with God's stewardship given to me to bring to completion for you the word of God, 26 the mystery hidden from ages and from generations past. But now it has been manifested to his holy ones, 27 to whom God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory. 28 It is he whom we proclaim, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

2. What are the characteristics of a person who is becoming spiritually "mature in Christ"?

Gospel Reading — Luke 10:38-42

38 As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. 39 She had a sister named Mary (who) sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. 40 Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." 41 The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. 42 There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."

3. Are you more like a Mary or a Martha? Explain.
4. How would you feel if you visited in Martha's house, and both she and her sister Mary left you to prepare the meal?
5. In what way do you think Jesus meant that it was "needful" for Martha to follow Mary's example?

The New American Bible, (Nashville, Tennessee: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) 1997.
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Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—July 25, 2010

Introduction: Prayer is one of the great mysteries of the Christian faith and one of the most difficult, yet most fruitful disciplines. It requires simple faith, not great faith, but simple faith. If it required great faith it would only be available to a few. Faith, “*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen, ...*” is the ability to believe God for things which we do not currently see. Consequently, prayer is both our first line of offense and first line of defense in spiritual warfare, for spiritual warfare is the unseen battle for the souls of people.

Rightly so, did the disciples recognize early in their relationship with Jesus that his life was marked by prayer, and that power and union with the Father was somehow linked to this discipline of prayer. They did not hesitate to ask, “Lord, teach us to pray.” The disciples were not religiously ignorant men. They were schooled in the prayers and praying of their Jewish faith, but they recognized that somehow Jesus’, and also John the Baptist’s, level of praying exceeded that with which they were familiar. So they asked, “Lord teach us to pray.” Perhaps that is the first lesson of this week’s Gospel Reading; **when we recognize the ineptness of our prayer life we need to humbly ask Jesus to teach us to pray.** Imagine what would happen if for a month or two you daily asked him to do this.

Ask another to teach you to pray and they probably will take you to their bookshelf or the local religious bookstore to find one of the myriad how-to books on the subject. Jesus simply taught them a useable format, so powerful that it has had enduring value for centuries both as a learned prayer and as a valuable pattern for praying. You can learn some things about prayer by reading about it, but you really learn to pray by praying. Imagine what would happen if along with your request to Jesus to teach you to pray, you began praying the Lord’s prayer daily for a month or two, not simply as a prayer but also as a pattern for other prayer.

Interestingly, in response to the disciple’s request, the other two things Jesus taught regarding prayer were to be persistent (“*Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you,*”) and to have confidence that God will do better than we ask (“*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father ...*”) Because prayer takes discipline, is spiritual warfare, and requires faith we need to learn to never give up. This message is especially vital in our culture of instant gratification where delay is not an option, and having it now is expected.

What could possibly entice us to be persistent when our prayers are not instantly answered? It could only be the conviction that God is really hearing us when we pray and that he has promised that his solutions will exceed our needs. If we perceive the Father to be like the man Jesus talked about, one from whom we have to wrestle help, we won’t persist. But Jesus shows us that the Father is not that way, rather he is more loving than the most caring parent. He will respond to our requests with answers that exceed our needs. If we believe he is the Gracious Giver we will persist in prayer.

St. Gregory of Nyssa, speaking of the Lord’s prayer says, “Now, I make bold to add a little to what Scripture says; for the present congregation needs instruction not so much on how to pray, as on the necessity of praying at all, a necessity that has perhaps not yet been grasped by most people. In fact, the majority of men grievously neglect in their life this sacred and divine work which is prayer. In this matter, therefore, I think it right first of all to insist as much as possible that one must persevere in prayer ... secondly, that we must listen attentively to the Divine Voice which proposes to us the manner in which we should offer prayer to the Lord.”

So let us begin afresh by asking, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

First Reading — Genesis 18:20-32

20 Then the LORD said: "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grave, 21 that I must go down and see whether or not their actions fully correspond to the cry against them that comes to me. I mean to find out."

22 While the two men walked on farther toward Sodom, the LORD remained standing before Abraham. 23 Then Abraham drew nearer to him and said: "Will you sweep away the innocent with the guilty? 24 Suppose there were fifty innocent people in the city; would you wipe out the place, rather than spare it for the sake of the fifty innocent people within it? 25 Far be it from you to do such a thing, to make the innocent die with the guilty, so that the innocent and the guilty would be treated alike! Should not the judge of all the world act with justice?" 26 The LORD replied, "If I find fifty innocent people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake." 27 Abraham spoke up again: "See how I am presuming to speak to my Lord, though I am but dust and ashes! 28 What if there are

five less than fifty innocent people? Will you destroy the whole city because of those five?" "I will not destroy it," he answered, "if I find forty-five there." 29 But Abraham persisted, saying, "What if only forty are found there?" He replied, "I will forebear doing it for the sake of the forty." 30 Then he said, "Let not my Lord grow impatient if I go on. What if only thirty are found there?" He replied, "I will forebear doing it if I can find but thirty there." 31 Still he went on, "Since I have thus dared to speak to my Lord, what if there are no more than twenty?" "I will not destroy it," he answered, "for the sake of the twenty." 32 But he still persisted: "Please, let not my Lord grow angry if I speak up this last time. What if there are at least ten there?" "For the sake of those ten," he replied, "I will not destroy it."

1. What can we learn about prayer from Abraham's experience?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 138:1-3, 6-8

1 I thank you, LORD, with all my heart; before the gods to you I sing. 2 I bow low toward your holy temple; I praise your name for your fidelity and love. For you have exalted over all your name and your promise.

3 When I cried out, you answered; you strengthened my spirit.

6 The LORD is on high, but cares for the lowly and knows the proud from afar. 7 Though I walk in the midst of dangers, you guard my life when my enemies rage. You stretch out your hand; your right hand saves me. 8 The LORD is with me to the end. LORD, your love endures forever. Never forsake the work of your hands!

Second Reading — Colossians 2:12-14

... 12 You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And even when you were dead (in) transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he brought you to life along with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions; 14 obliterating the bond against us, with its legal claims, which was opposed to us, he also removed it from our midst, nailing it to the cross;

2. What purpose or motivation for prayer do you find in this passage about our salvation?

Gospel Reading — Luke 11:1-13

1 He was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples." 2 He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread 4 and forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us, and do not subject us to the final test."

5 And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, 6 for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,' 7 and he says in reply from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.' 8 I tell you, if he does not get up to give him the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence. 9 "And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. 11 What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? 12 Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? 13 If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

3. What aspect of the Lord's prayer is most meaningful to you?
4. What aspect of your prayer life would you most like to have Jesus help you change?
6. Describe how you think God is viewing you, and your requests, when you pray?

The New American Bible, (Nashville, Tennessee: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) 1997.
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How will you spend your summer? Consider re-*Discovering the God We Call Father*. See page 10

What will you do with your summer to continue growing spiritually?

Brother Ramon, author of the book *Forty Days and Forty Nights*, tells the story of two boys endeavoring to play a joke on a holy hermit. “They caught a tiny bird and intended to hold the bird in their hand behind their back and ask the hermit if the bird was dead or alive. If the hermit said it was dead, the boy planned to open his hand and let the bird fly up to the sky.

If the hermit said it was alive, the boy planned to crush the bird in his hand to prove that the wise old man was wrong. ‘Father,’ said one of the lads, ‘I have a small bird in my hand. Is it alive or dead?’ There was a silence. Then the old man fixed him with his gaze. Eventually he chuckled and said, ‘Well, boys—**it all depends on you!**’ ”

Our growth in Christ as a Catholic will in large part depend on us and the choices we make. Let me encourage you to grow deeper in your understanding of the Father’s love by completing the bible study *Discovering the God We Call Father*. This study can be used effectively for individuals, families, or small groups.

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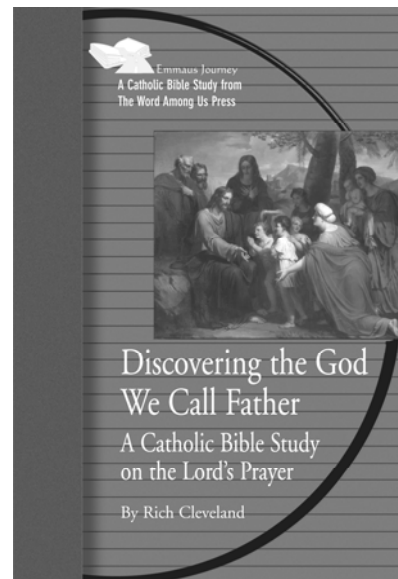
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Nothing is more refreshing than time spent reflecting on the love our Father has for us.