

Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

June—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 MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST SUNDAY—June 6, 2010

Introduction: The last verse of this week's Gospel Reading says, "And they took up what was left over, twelve baskets of broken pieces." The reference to broken pieces reminds me of an incident that happened during Lent a few years ago. At our parish during Lent, the people responsible for the liturgical decorations strategically placed cracked and broken clay pots among the floral decorations to remind us of our brokenness. A friend's granddaughter, about six years old, was sitting near the front of the church and upon observing the broken pots laying about, turned to her granddad and said, "Granddad, this place is a mess!" Well sometimes our brokenness certainly is a mess, but it also can be a source of encouragement and hope when people realize that Jesus receives us in our brokenness, and makes us whole again.

Christ's body and blood probably did not appear very attractive either. Sometimes I think we are spoiled by the sophisticated beauty of our gold and silver crucifix jewelry, and are subtly deceived into minimizing the awfulness of the cross. When once visiting Spain we saw many *Santos*, statues used in religious processions, and a lot of Spanish art depicting Jesus' sacrifice. Many of them made us cringe due to their vivid and gory depictions, and rightly so. Christ's death for us was a brutalization of his body and the spilling of his real blood. The rebuffs of the palace guards were not merely verbal affronts, but they rendered real physical blows on his body that bruised and battered our Lord. The crown of thorns fashioned for him to wear was made of real, long, flesh piercing thorns that provided a crown of pain pushed forcibly into the flesh of his scalp. The nails were real. The next time you are in a hardware store go to the nail bins and pick up and handle some of the spikes. Pick up spikes large enough to pierce through a man's hands and feet, and to go deep enough into the wood to hold the person upright on a piece of tree. Realize that similar spikes, though less slender and sophisticated, were forcefully driven through our Lord's body, pounded again, and again, and again, until the nails were securely imbedded in the log. Imagine the jolt and tearing of the flesh as the cross was raised and dropped into the posthole. It was gory! It should make us cringe.

No matter how unpleasant the scene may be in our minds, or how long the image lingers there, we must be able to envision it to return some semblance of reality to what it cost our Lord to secure our salvation. His was a battered, bruised and bloodied body that hung and died on the cross. The Scripture says in Hebrews 9:22, "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." So Jesus shed it all. We would do well to devote more time to reflecting on Jesus' sacrifice. Though salvation is free it is not price-less, it cost a heavy price. **Continued meditation on Christ's Holy Body and Blood gives us an accurate understanding of what our salvation cost Jesus. From that understanding comes a proper response of gratitude, devotion, and commitment.** "It was necessary that it be this way. How else could he have borne the totality of the world's sin? He had to bear all that the world did to him, and all the consequences of all the crimes of all time, of which what we did to him is the chief." (from *Death on a Friday Afternoon*, by Fr. R. J. Neuhaus) The little girl's comments could have referred to the world's spiritual and moral condition, "This place is a mess!" It certainly is, and the Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is the remedy for healing and putting the pieces of our lives back together.

First Reading — Genesis 14:18-20

18 Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram with these words: 19 Blessed be Abram by God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your foes into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

1. How has Christ satisfied your need for being blessed?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 110:1-4

- 1 The LORD says to you, my lord: "Take your throne at my righthand, while I make your enemies your footstool."
- 2 The scepter of your sovereign might the LORD will extend from Zion. The LORD says: "Rule over your enemies!"
- 3 Yours is princely power from the day of your birth. In holy splendor before the daystar, like the dew I begot you."
- 4 The LORD has sworn and will not waver: "Like Melchizedek you are a priest forever."

Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, 24 and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

1. When you receive the body and blood of Christ in Eucharist, what do you think about?
2. What do you think Jesus specifically wanted the disciples to remember? Why?

Gospel Reading — Luke 9:11-17

11 The crowds, meanwhile, learned of this and followed him. He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and he healed those who needed to be cured.

12 As the day was drawing to a close, the Twelve approached him and said, "Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms and find lodging and provisions; for we are in a deserted place here."

13 He said to them, "Give them some food yourselves." They replied, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have, unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people." 14 Now the men there numbered about five thousand. Then he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of (about) fifty." 15 They did so and made them all sit down. 16 Then taking ⁷ the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. 17 They all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

3. Why do you think Jesus involved the disciples in the feeding of the multitude?
4. What message do the twelve baskets of left over broken pieces of bread and fish signify?
5. What can we do to welcome people to our parish life and encourage them to be nourished by Christ?

Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—June 13, 2010

Introduction: The burden of guilt is a heavy load to bear, a load made even more heavy when we awake to how the consequence of our sin has negatively impacted others—which it almost always does. David, in this week's first reading found himself in just such a predicament. David, entrapped by the lust of his eyes, pursued the gratification of his flesh through adultery without considering the consequences of his actions. When his paramour became pregnant he attempted and failed to conceal his guilt and in desperation manipulated the circumstances so that they resulted in the death of her husband, Uriah. But he learned a valuable truth the hard way: sin cannot be hidden from God, and usually not from others either.

Though David responded in true repentance when the prophet Nathan confronted him, and sought and gained forgiveness from God, he could not change the lingering affects of his sin and the dire consequences they brought upon both his family and his nation, Israel. You see, sin can be likened to spikes driven into a healthy tree. Though the wielder of the hammer may later regret his actions and pull the spikes from the tree, the scarring affects linger forever. So it is with some sins, though repented of and forgiven, their scarring affects on ourselves and others are hard to remove. And so awakened to the reality of his sin and its affects, David sought and obtained forgiveness. He could attest with the Psalmist, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity."

In the Gospel reading we see another long-lasting affect, one that should be forever, namely the overflowing gratitude that comes from knowing that one's sins are forgiven. This story of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet with her tears and her precious perfume, and dried them with her hair and her kisses, is an illustration of how gratitude should move us to action. This is the mark of the Christian life—"the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all ... that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." (2 Corinthian 5:14,15) Gratitude for sins forgiven is a force that propels us to Christ honoring dedication and action. Where there is little dedication and action there is little gratitude.

David and the woman who anointed Jesus stand in stark contrast to one another when it comes to how they dealt with their sin. One concealed the other revealed. The Psalmist advises us to "acknowledge our sin,"—to call a spade a spade, to identify and name our sins for what they are. Further he cautions us to not try and cover them up, to diminish their significance, excuse, or mislabel them. It is only when we openly confess and acknowledge our sins that the burden of guilt can be removed and the joy of a restored relationship with the Father can be experienced.

This is one of the major benefits of participating in frequent reconciliation. The burden of guilt cannot continue to intensify over time or overwhelm us with their magnitude when they are consistently dealt with as the Psalmist suggests. Rather the burden of guilt is lifted as frequently as we confess and repent of our sins and avail ourselves of reconciliation. We in turn, through this process, are empowered to live for Christ, motivated by gratitude for the gracious forgiveness of our sin and removal of the burden of guilt.

First Reading — 2 Samuel 12:7-10, 13

7 Then Nathan said to David: "You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I anointed you king of Israel. I rescued you from the hand of Saul. 8 I gave you your lord's house and your lord's wives for your own. I gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were not enough, I could count up for you still more. 9 Why have you spurned the LORD and done evil in his sight? You have cut down Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you took his wife as your own, and him you killed with the sword of the Ammonites. 10 Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah to be your wife.' ...

13 Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan answered David: "The LORD on his part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die."

1. What lessons about sin, repentance and forgiveness do you find in this passage?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 7, 11

1 Happy the sinner whose fault is removed, whose sin is forgiven. 2 Happy those to whom the LORD imputes no guilt, in whose spirit is no deceit. ...

5 Then I declared my sin to you; my guilt I did not hide. I said, "I confess my faults to the LORD," and you took away the guilt of my sin. Selah ...

7 You are my shelter; from distress you keep me; with safety you ring me round. Selah ...

11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you just; exult, all you upright of heart.

Second Reading — Galatians 2:16, 19-21

16 ... who know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. ...

19 For through the law I died to the law, that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ; 20 yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me. 21 I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

2. If works do not justify us, what is their significance in the plan of salvation?

3. What does St. Paul mean about nullifying the grace of God?

Gospel Reading — Luke 7:36-8:3

36 A Pharisee invited him to dine with him, and he entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. 37 Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, 38 she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment. 39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner."

40 Jesus said to him in reply, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. 41 "Two people were in debt to a certain creditor; one owed five hundred days' wages ¹² and the other owed fifty. 42 Since they were unable to repay the debt, he forgave it for both. Which of them will love him more?"

43 Simon said in reply, "The one, I suppose, whose larger debt was forgiven." He said to him, "You have judged rightly."

44 Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with ointment. 47 So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little."

48 He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 The others at table said to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50 But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

8:1 Afterward he journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. Accompanying him were the Twelve 2 and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, 3 Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources..

4. Where do you see yourself in this story?

5. Considering all the participants in this story, what does Jesus teach us about relating to sinners?

6. How can you (we) increase our gratitude for forgiveness? What should we do to express it?

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

THE TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—June 20, 2010

“This kingdom and this salvation, which are the key words of Jesus Christ’s evangelization, are available to every human being as grace and mercy, ... each individual gains them through a total interior renewal which the Gospel calls *metanoia*; it is a radical conversion, a profound change of mind and heart.”¹

This week’s Gospel reading gives us a peek into a major moment of *metanoia* in the disciples lives. Jesus, having revealed himself to the disciples by words and deeds, initiates a moment of conversion—a time of faith brought to fruition, a time of movement from vagueness to clarity, and from indecision to action.

The two questions Jesus asked Peter required Peter to make a decision as to whether he was going to hide behind the indecision and meaningless speculation of the crowd or whether he was going to courageously and openly take a stand on what he believed. Perhaps being a fisherman he knew that any dead fish can float downstream. It takes no effort to go through life ever musing with others about Jesus. Let’s face it he is a good topic of conversation. But it takes strength and courage to openly declare that you believe he is the Christ, the Son of God and are going to follow him.

Once we have made a similar declaration it demonstrates that we have undergone a “radical conversion, a profound change of mind and heart,” and it calls for a continuing radical conversion and profound change. Conversion and change disrupt the status quo and complacency of our lives. In Jesus’ words it requires that we continuously deny ourselves—something for which we have had little experience and for which we have had little desire.

Fortunately, Jesus introduces a paradox, a statement that seems contradictory to common sense but which is apparently true, to motivate and focus the disciples on the rewards of denying one’s self. For, “Whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it.” We can almost see the disciples quizzically look at one another and hear their silently mouthed question, “How can these things be?”

Jesus, of course, is referring to the exchanged life wherein we are able to exchange a mediocre existence for one of purpose and vitality. This seems contradictory since many of us believe that a life of self-gratification and self-preservation will lead to peace, happiness, and prosperity. It never has and never will for more than a moment or two.

The richest, most powerful man in the world learned this lesson and left us an accounting of his conclusions. Solomon had unbridled power, uncountable riches, and wives and lovers without number yet concluded that they only secured emptiness. “All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing ...”²

The exchanged life of which Jesus speaks in this paradox is the happy exchange of emptiness for a deeply satisfying relationship with the living God and a life filled with purpose, and “A fountain ... to cleanse from sin and uncleanness” and participation in God’s eternal promises as the other readings attest.

Unfortunately the response of many to this exchanged life creates an enigma—something difficult to understand and explain. If these two truths, that Jesus is the Christ and that we can exchange a life of endless mediocrity and dissatisfying emptiness for a deeply satisfying relationship with God, are indeed true, and they are, why would someone not choose to embrace and follow Jesus. You can’t explain it. As Pope Paul VI explained this kingdom and salvation is available to every human being—including you.

1. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, by Pope Paul VI

2. *Ecclesiastes* 1:8

First Reading — Zechariah 12:10-11; 13:1

10 I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and petition; and they shall look on him whom they have thrust through, and they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only son, and they shall grieve over him as one grieves over a first-born. 11 On that day the mourning in Jerusalem shall be as great as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. ... 13:1 On that day there shall be open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a fountain to purify from sin and uncleanness.

1. What does an indifferent response to Jesus and his suffering for our salvation indicate?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 63:2-6, 8-9

2 O God, you are my God-- for you I long! For you my body yearns; for you my soul thirsts, Like a land parched, lifeless, and without water. 3 So I look to you in the sanctuary to see your power and glory. 4 For your love is better than life; my lips offer you worship!

5 I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands, calling on your name. 6 My soul shall savor the rich banquet of praise, with joyous lips my mouth shall honor you! ...

8 That you indeed are my help, and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy. 9 My soul clings fast to you; your right hand upholds me.

Second Reading — Galatians 3:26-29

26 For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendant, heirs according to the promise.

2. Identify one or more promises which has become part of our inheritance.

Gospel Reading — Luke 9:18-24

18 Once when Jesus was praying in solitude, and the disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" 19 They said in reply, "John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, 'One of the ancient prophets has arisen.'" 20 Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said in reply, "The Messiah of God." 21 He rebuked them and directed them not to tell this to anyone. 22 He said, "The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised."

23 Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

3. How would you answer Jesus' question, "Who do the *people* say that I am?"

4. How would you personally and comprehensively answer the question, "Who do *you* say that I am?"

5. What areas of life, or particulars of life, come to your mind when you hear Jesus' statement, "let him deny himself and take up his cross?"

6. How does the challenge and the promise of verses 23-24 make you feel?

Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—June 27, 2010

Introduction: Having recently read the biography of Mother Teresa I am impressed by her dedication, and challenged by her willingness to pay the cost of following and serving Christ. She left her family and home at the age of 18 to join a religious order, six weeks later she left England for India which became her home. At 38 she left the convent alone, with only a handful of possessions and 5 rupees in her pocket, to found a new ministry to the poorest among the poor. In subsequent years her mission would prevent her from attending the funeral of both her mother and brother. Unprecedented dedication like hers reminds me of Bonhoeffer's statement, "When Christ calls a man [or woman] he bids him come die."

Perhaps even more impressive is the fruit that was produced by this little life, as Mother Teresa followed her Savior. Along with the ability to see Christ in the poorest of the poor, Christ gifted Mother Teresa with the ability to call thousands into his service. In addition to those called to serve with her in the initial mission in India she enrolled thousands of people in his service by establishing over 388 additional missionary charity foundations, a parallel order for men, and support lay organizations. Remarkable fruit!

In this week's Gospel Reading Jesus makes following him very difficult for those who expressed an inclination to do so. But was he in fact making it hard for them to follow or simply making it clear that following him is not for the half-hearted or the faint-hearted. Jesus being always true and merciful would never allow a person to make a life choice of this magnitude under false pretenses, so he simply and graciously stated the cost. **Salvation is free—but a life of service is not without cost.** Jesus is looking for followers, wholehearted, unencumbered followers devoid of misconceptions regarding the cost but who still chose to "come die."

People who are bound by self-concerns and enslaved to uncontrolled desires are not free to follow. Each time an encumbered person embraces the mission of Christ without counting the cost, they are endanger of becoming like Israel. Israel you'll recall was tempted to turn back from following God to slacken their thirst for the inordinate and ordinary pleasures of Egypt. It is only when a person's love for Christ exceeds their love of self that a person becomes really available to him "The Lord has required that 'whoever will come after him must deny himself.' But what he commands is neither hard nor painful when he himself helps us in such a way so that the very thing he requires may be accomplished...for whatever seems hard in what is enjoined, love makes easy." (Saint Augustine)

Many of us bemoan the decrease in candidates for religious vocations. I wonder if we have so removed the challenge and dedication of being Jesus' follower that people look elsewhere to fulfill their spirit of sacrifice? Mother Teresa demonstrated that even in the midst of diminishing vocations, people would abandon the easy life to follow Jesus and to serve him wholeheartedly. But it did not seem to be the need that motivated them but rather their deep and abiding love for Christ. Jesus has demonstrated through the Mother Teresa's of the world, both the well-known and the myriad of unknown saints, that **if we will give him our heart, he will give us a challenge worthy of our life.**

What will it take for people to hear the call and respond—dedicated examples, spiritual formation that is grounded in the Scriptures and the Eucharist, and that finds its completion in a deep and abiding love for Christ? This formation needs to take place not only after a person responds to a call to a religious vocation, but long before. For it is out of the love for Christ that has been formed in us that we chose to put our hand to the plow and not look back.

First Reading — 1 Kings 19:16,19-21

16 Then you shall anoint Jehu, son of Nimshi, as king of Israel, and Elisha, son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah, as prophet to succeed you. ...

19 Elijah set out, and came upon Elisha, son of Shaphat, as he was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen; he was following the twelfth. Elijah went over to him and threw his cloak over him. 20 Elisha left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Please, let me kiss my father and mother good-bye, and I will follow you." "Go back!" Elijah answered. "Have I done anything to you?" 21 Elisha left him and, taking the yoke of oxen, slaughtered them; he used the plowing equipment for fuel to boil their flesh, and gave it to his people to eat. Then he left and followed Elijah as his attendant.

1. How do you feel about Christ's call to leave all and follow him?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-11

1 Keep me safe, O God; in you I take refuge 2 I say to the Lord, you are my Lord, you are my only good. ...

5 LORD, my allotted portion and my cup, you have made my destiny secure. ...

7 I bless the LORD who counsels me; even at night my heart exhorts me. 8 I keep the LORD always before me; with the Lord at my right, I shall never be shaken. 9 Therefore my heart is glad, my soul rejoices; my body also dwells secure, 10 For you will not abandon me to Sheol, nor let your faithful servant see the pit.

11 You will show me the path to life, abounding joy in your presence, the delights at your right hand forever.

Second Reading — Galatians 5:1, 13-18

1 For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. ...

13 For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another.

16 I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. 18 But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

2. What are some of the ways in which we allow ourselves to become enslaved again after Christ has set us free?
3. How can we insure that we are walking in the Spirit and not in the desires of the flesh?
4. What does it mean to walk in the Spirit?

Gospel Reading — Luke 9:51-62

51 When the days for his being taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem, 52 and he sent messengers ahead of him. On the way they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his reception there, 53 but they would not welcome him because the destination of his journey was Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" 55 Jesus turned and rebuked them, 56 and they journeyed to another village.

57 As they were proceeding on their journey someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

58 Jesus answered him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head." 59 And to another he said, "Follow me." But he replied, "(Lord,) let me go first and bury my father."

60 But he answered him, "Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." 61 And another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home." 62 (To him) Jesus said, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."

5. How does knowing that Jesus' face was set to go to Jerusalem to endure the impending sacrifice, help explain his statements to those who lightly said, "I will follow you wherever you go?"
6. If you said, "I will follow you wherever you go," what cost would Jesus call to your attention?
7. To what extent do you feel that Christ is calling you to follow him in an extraordinary way?

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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CHAPTER 6:

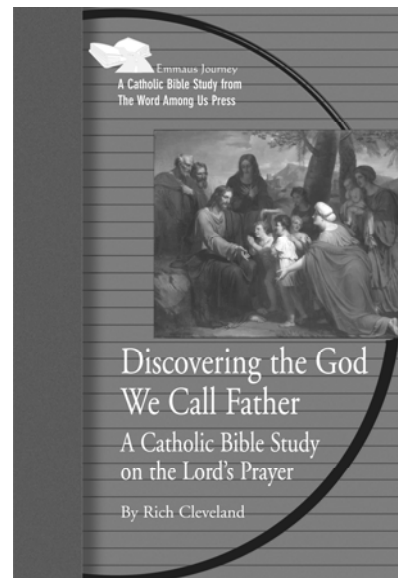
Relying on God’s Resources—Grace for Today

CHAPTER 7:

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CHAPTER 8:

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