



Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 6, 2014

Jesus Reveals the Mysteries of God's Kingdom

Focus: To learn about God the Father from Jesus.

Lectionary #100

Zechariah 9:9-10

Psalms 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14

Romans 8:9, 11-13

Matthew 11:25-30

Catechist's Context

Jesus knows just what each of us needs. While we may be distracted by material or emotional desires, activities, and the demands of work and family, Christ knows that what we truly need is to live in deep, humble, and trusting relationship with God.

Sign of the Cross

All make the Sign of the Cross.

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.**

Alleluia

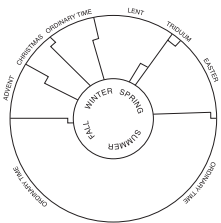
See Matthew 11:25

Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven
and earth;

you have revealed to little ones the mysteries
of the kingdom.

Alleluia, alleluia.



Liturgical Calendar Connection

Have the young people find this Fourteenth Sunday on the liturgical calendar. Point out the return to the liturgical green of Ordinary Time and feasts and commemorations that mark the weeks to come.

Gospel

Matthew 11:25–30

At that time Jesus exclaimed: “I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to little ones. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

Gospel Reflection

God Is with Us

In this Sunday’s Gospel, Jesus prays to God the Father, and in his prayer, we learn about who God is and who we are in relationship with God. We hear that we are to be like Christ—humble and focused on the important things in life. We hear that we can live with God through our living in Christ. Christ will offer us consolation and rest when it seems that life is a burden or when it seems all we do is work.

☉ Have you had times in your life in which it seemed everything was hard or burdensome?

☉ How do you hold on to faith in difficult times?

Jesus tells us that even when life seems difficult, we will find the grace to live well and be at peace. In Christ we find the strength of God to guide and help us as we journey together towards union with God forever in heaven.

Christ also tells us that the ways of God do not have to be overly complicated. Rather, when we stay connected to Christ through the Church, the sacraments, prayer, service, and humble obedience, we know that God will provide all we need. God knows what we need better than we do! Christ asks us to stay focused and not to let go.

☉ What kinds of distractions or struggles do you face?

☉ Do you or your friends sometimes lose sight of God?

☉ What actions might you take to stay connected to God?

☉ Have you ever done something to grow closer to God during a hard time? Did it help?

Focus on Church Teaching

In this Sunday's Gospel, we hear Jesus praying to the Father, speaking a prayer of praise and union to which we are called as well. Through this prayer and Jesus's words that follow, we recognize that Christ's way is the way of humility and of trust in God. Jesus invites us into a life that offers rest when we are weary and food when we are hungry. We are offered the Kingdom of God, which is made known in Christ, and which demands of us attention to those who labor and are burdened (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 787, 2603; *Lumen Gentium*, 3).

Knowing God

You will need paper and writing materials to do this activity.

In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus tells us that the Son reveals the Father to those whom the Son wishes. Invite the young people to make a list of the qualities of God we perceive and learn through reading and studying the Gospel, our Church teachings, and the witness of holy men and women throughout the ages. What are we called to do as a result of knowing God in Christ?

Prayer Chain

You will need construction paper, scissors, tape, and writing materials to do this activity.

Remind the young people that, in this Sunday's Gospel, we hear Jesus praying in a heartfelt way to God the Father. Jesus speaks to God honestly, without holding things back, trusting that God cares and will respond. Have the young people cut a sheet of paper into strips. On each strip, they'll write a heartfelt prayer to God about a personal need, a situation that needs resolution, the need of a close family member or friend, or the needs of the poor in your city or world. Use tape to make a chain from the strips of paper. For the next few sessions, pray for the needs represented on the chain. You might want to put the chain on your prayer table or hang it in a prominent place.

Prayers and Blessings at Home

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 6, 2014



Lectionary Readings

Zechariah 9:9–10

Psalm 145:1–2, 8–9, 10–11,
13–14

Romans 8:9, 11–13

Matthew 11:25–30

Our Father

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

Prayer for the Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Lord God,
may we never cease to praise you.
Send us your Holy Spirit,
so that we may grow in faith, hope,
and charity.
We ask this through Jesus Christ,
our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.
Amen.**

Family Blessing

This week, invite each of your family members to promise to pray for another family member throughout the week.

Living the Liturgy at Home

As people who are united to God and each other in Christ, we are called to reveal God's love through our words and our actions. This week, discuss simple ways you can demonstrate God's care and compassion for others. You might focus on a neighbor who is alone, or a family member who is experiencing a particular difficulty. Perhaps your family members will promise to be particularly kind to one another, or reach out in service to a stranger who needs a caring hand. At the end of the week offer a prayer for the people you have helped.



Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 13, 2014

Fertile Ground for God's Word

Lectionary #103

Isaiah 55:10–11

Psalms 65:10, 11, 12–13, 14

Romans 8:18–23

Matthew 13:1–23 or 13:1–9

Focus: To receive and follow through on God's Word.

Catechist's Context

Today we hear the parable of the sower, the seed, and the soil. What kind of soil are you? Do you create the conditions through which God's Word and God's life may take root in your heart and mind, or do you allow it to be crowded out by selfish concerns or the shallow things of the world?

Sign of the Cross

All make the Sign of the Cross.

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.**

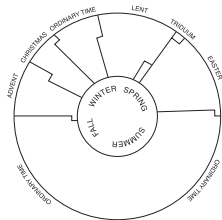
Alleluia

Alleluia, alleluia.

The seed is the word of God, Christ is the sower.

All who come to him will have life forever.

Alleluia, alleluia.



Liturgical Calendar Connection

Ask the young people to find the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time on the liturgical calendar. What saints' feasts or memorials occur during this week? July 14 is the memorial of St. Kateri Tekakwitha. She was a Native American and laywoman who converted to Christianity in spite of some relatives' opposition. When she was declared a saint, she was the first Native American to become one.

Gospel

Matthew 13:1–23 or 13:1–9

On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear.”

Gospel Reflection

The Sower, the Seed, and the Soil

In this Sunday’s Gospel, Jesus tells the people a story as a way of illustrating the need to have an open mind and heart to embrace God’s ways in our lives. He explains to the disciples that he uses the parable as a way to teach those who are ready to hear. Those who hear the story with a closed mind will simply be confused by the parable, but those whose minds and hearts are open will receive the richness of the message and will change their lives as a result.

☉ Summarize in your own words what Jesus says in the parable.

☉ Who does the sower represent? *God*

☉ What does the seed represent? *God’s Word*

☉ What does the soil represent? *people’s minds and hearts*

Through this parable, we are asked to think about our own lives. The sower puts some of

the seeds on the path, but they can’t grow there. They can’t take root, so birds eat them.

☉ How might God’s Word come to someone’s heart or mind but be unable to get into the soil? What kinds of people or situations might be like the seed that falls on the path?

☉ What might be some situations in which God’s Word might shoot up right away but then get lost as soon as it is challenged by something, like the plants were lost as soon as they were challenged by the sun?

☉ Can you think of any situations in which God’s Word might start to grow but be choked out by someone or something?

The seeds that the sower plants in good soil grow and bear fruit. Jesus tells us that this seed is like the person who hears God’s Word and understands it.

☉ What kinds of good fruit might we bear when we hear God’s Word and understand it?

☉ What kind of soil do you think you are right now for God’s Word?

☉ What could you do to be good soil and bear fruit?

Focus on Church Teaching

Today we consider the ways in which we are open or closed to God's Word and God's life. We are asked to think of God's Word as seed and are called to identify what we do to cultivate it in our minds and hearts. The Holy Spirit sustains us so that, no matter how much we are tempted to crowd out God's will through stubbornness or acquiescence to the surrounding culture's focus on materialism, individualism, or hedonism, we will find the strength to live as God desires (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1724).

The Rich Soil of Faith

You will need paper and writing materials to do this activity.

Invite the young people to reflect, in writing, on the following questions: Who are your friends who accept and support your life of faith? Do you have friends who might be an obstacle to faith, who are like the people Jesus described today as having closed eyes and ears? For whom are you a faith-filled friend, offering your support and acceptance? Ensure enough time at the end of the activity for volunteers to share their reflections.

Soil Analysis

You will need a board or newsprint, chalk or markers, paper, and writing materials to do this activity.

Write the four types of soil from this Sunday's Gospel on the board: path, rocky ground, among thorns, rich soil. Review aloud the characteristics of each, using the Bible text for direction. Have the young people number their sheets of paper from one to three, leaving space to write after each number. Have them select any of the four types of soil and write it next to number one. Next to number two, have them write a sentence describing a person who would be that type of soil. They don't have to name anyone specifically, but just write some characteristics or behaviors. Next to number three, have them write a few sentences about a time in their life when they were like that type of soil.

Mixed Soil

You will need paper and writing materials to do this activity.

Gardens and backyards contain many different types of soil. There might be wet patches and dry patches, or areas where the soil is sandy or rocky. As people, we are a complicated mix too. There might be some areas of our life where God's Word easily takes root, and others where it gets lost, forgotten, or choked out by other things. Ask the young people to identify which type of soil they are in each of these areas of their lives. Encourage them to choose one area to work on in the coming weeks.

☉ at school

☉ at home

☉ with friends

☉ at church

☉ in extracurricular activities or sports

☉ on the Internet

☉ with outsiders or people you don't know well

Prayers and Blessings at Home

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



July 13, 2014

Lectionary Readings

Isaiah 55:10–11

Psalms 65:10, 11, 12–13, 14

Romans 8:18–23

Matthew 13:1–23 or 13:1–9w

Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Prayer for the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Creator God,
let your Spirit move in power over us
to transform our hearts into the good soil
you seek.
Then may your Word bear fruit a
hundredfold through our deeds,
and thus reveal a world
that eagerly awaits the blessed hope and
glorious freedom of your reign.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus
Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.
Amen.

Family Blessing

Make a card that reads, “But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it.” Place the card next to a potted flower or plant set in a prominent place at home. Pray that God blesses each of you to be like rich soil.

Living the Liturgy at Home

This week, give each person in your family a small flower pot or a spot in the yard in which to plant seeds. As the seeds are planted, talk together about the conditions that help to assure the seeds will flourish and liken this example to our spiritual lives. We prepare the soil by watering it and adding fertilizer. We must ensure that the young plants have sufficient light. How is this like the care we must give our lives? Tend the seeds in the coming weeks as a reminder of this Sunday's Gospel.



Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 20, 2014

Justice Tempered with Compassion

Lectionary #106

Focus: To experience the Kingdom of Heaven.

Wisdom 12:13, 16–19

Psalms 86:5–6, 9–10, 15–16

Romans 8:26–27

Matthew 13:24–43 or 13:24–30

Catechist's Context

What a good and patient God is our God! Today we are presented with readings that illustrate God's desire that we live justly. We hear that God waits for our return when we have wandered. We are reminded that small things add up to great things when done in Christ's name.

Alleluia

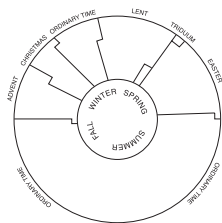
See Matthew 11:25

Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth;

you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom.

Alleluia, alleluia.



Liturgical Calendar Connection

Ask the young people to find the Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time on the liturgical calendar. The primary color of this season is green, symbolizing hope and growth. Hope and growth are also the themes of the season, and enable us to focus on the total mystery of Christ's life and teaching.

Sign of the Cross

All make the Sign of the Cross.

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.**

Gospel

Matthew 13:24–30 (longer form Matthew 13:24–43)

Jesus proposed another parable to the crowds, saying: “The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off. When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. The slaves of the householder came to him and said, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?’ He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ His slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ He replied, ‘No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, “First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.””

Gospel Reflection

God’s Justice and Patience

☉ Have you ever done a small service for someone else that seemed to make a big difference to them? What happened?

Today, we continue the section of the Gospel of Matthew in which Jesus uses parables to tell us about the Kingdom of Heaven. God sows the good seed of justice and right relationship in our lives because he desires that we live fruitful lives. Sometimes, however, we give in to negative behaviors, attitudes, or actions that are like weeds in the field God has planted. But God will wait patiently for our return, and we are assured that God will judge our actions justly at the end of time.

We are also reminded (in the longer form of the Gospel) that small things can grow into great ones. The Kingdom, we are told, is like a tiny seed that grows into a large plant. As people who have been given the gift of faith, we are called to build God’s Kingdom on earth by sharing our presence and care with others. When we do this on earth, we have an idea of what to look forward to in the future.

☉ Think about the past week. Which of your actions or thoughts helped grow the good seed that God has planted within you?

☉ What did you do or say were like weeds of negativity, harm, or hurt toward yourself or another?

☉ What will help you to grow strong and faithful, and to avoid evil or sinful ways?

☉ What small things can you do for others as a sign of God’s love?

Focus on Church Teaching

This Sunday's Gospel reminds us that God is patient with us, showing mercy, withholding judgment for a final day, and hoping that we will seek repentance and live justly (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 827, 1037). Knowing the compassionate justice that God wants for all, we contemplate on Jesus's words and deeds, inspiring us to unite ourselves with Christ.

Small Acts as a Sign of Faith

We each have the potential to change another's life for the better by the way we behave, through small actions that add up to something special for another. It is just as easy, though, to foster meanness, petty disagreements, bullying or negativity that quickly take over our interactions with others, creating a field of weeds where flowers or fruit should be growing. Have pairs talk about times when they did something small that wound up making a big difference for someone else. Also encourage them to talk about times when they did things that didn't seem like a big deal to them, but that wound up really hurting someone else. Ask volunteers to share their discussion with the rest of the group.

Wheat and Weeds

You will need construction paper, scissors, tape, and coloring materials to do this activity.

Have the young people form small groups. Ask each group to retell the Gospel in a creative way. The group may create a skit; they may draw a cartoon or design a booklet with illustrations; or they might write a song or adapt a familiar tune to tell the story. Make materials available so that they can create props or illustrations. Ask each group to share their creation with the others as the session ends.

The Kingdom Today

You will need writing materials and paper to do this activity.

In the Gospel, Jesus uses images and analogies that would have made sense to people of his time. What images or analogies might people use today to describe the Kingdom? Invite each young person to write a modern version of Jesus's parable to describe the Kingdom of God. How would they integrate social media into their versions? Invite volunteers to share their finished work with the rest of the group.

Prayers and Blessings at Home

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



July 20, 2014

Lectionary Readings

Wisdom 12:13, 16–19

Psalm 86:5–6, 9–10, 15–16

Romans 8:26–27

Matthew 13:24–43 or 13:24–30

Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Prayer for the Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Merciful Father,
your patience reflects your desire
for us to repent and live in your grace.
Give us the strength and the will
to change those things that are contrary
to you.
Grant this through Jesus Christ, our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.
Amen.

Family Blessing

This week, offer special prayers for your child, asking God to help each him or her cultivate a fruitful life in which God's love grows and flourishes. Write a brief note to your child affirming God's love or expressing your love.

Living the Liturgy at Home

Ask each person in your family to think about small acts of kindness he or she will offer to other family members this week. Invite each person to make note of their small acts. Ask them to be particularly aware this week of the ways in which the actions of others can have a positive impact on their lives.



Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 27, 2014

Yearning for Wisdom

Lectionary #109

1 Kings 3:5, 7–12

Psalm 119:57, 72, 76–77, 127–128, 129–130

Romans 8:28–30

Matthew 13:44–52 or 13:44–46

Focus: To understand the path to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Catechist's Context

This Sunday's Gospel continues Jesus's series of parables teaching about the Kingdom of God. Help the young people to see the Kingdom as something that they can treasure and focus on in the midst of their busy lives.

Sign of the Cross

All make the Sign of the Cross.

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.**

Alleluia

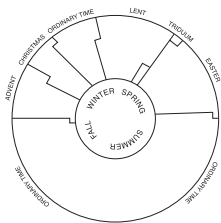
See Matthew 11:25

Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed are you Father, Lord of heaven
and earth;

for you have revealed to little ones the
mysteries of the kingdom.

Alleluia, alleluia.



Liturgical Calendar Connection

Ask the young people to find the Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time on the liturgical calendar. Count back to see how many days it has been since the season of Easter ended. How have the young people changed and grown in faith over that time?

Gospel

Matthew 13:44–52 or 13:44–46

Jesus said to his disciples: “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.”

Gospel Reflection

True Value

☉ What is really important to you? What or who is of great value in your life?

☉ Is there anything that is so important to you that you would change your life as a result?

In this Sunday’s Gospel, we are shown that the Kingdom of Heaven is of such value that nothing should stand in the way of our living according to Christ’s way. This path leads us to glimpse the Kingdom of Heaven now and we are assured of knowing the fullness of life in Christ in the age to come. Through the parables we have heard on these last few Sundays, we are being asked to think about all of this in our own lives. How important is our faith in Christ to us? Just what will we do for Christ and for others in Christ’s name? Are we simply people who go through the motions, figuring that doing an okay job of building the Kingdom is good enough? Or do we really see ourselves as being blessed to glimpse the face of Christ in the Eucharist, Reconciliation, in one another, in what is good and beautiful?

We might think about this in a way that is more familiar to us. Think about your favorite sport or activity.

☉ When you first began to play the sport or participate in the activity, were you really good at it? How serious were you about it?

☉ Now that you have been doing the sport or activity for a while, has your commitment to it changed? Why?

As we identify the things that we enjoy and that are important to us, we grow in our willingness to spend time working at them. At some point, you probably realized that this activity was important to you, and was worth more of your time. You wanted to get really good at it and you realized that would require some commitment. Your commitment is a sign that this activity is important and worth spending the time.

At the point at which today’s Gospel story takes place, Jesus is asking his disciples to think more carefully about the importance of their relationship with him in their lives. He tells us that if we really belong to Christ, we will order our lives accordingly. Of course, we are not left alone to make this commitment and live it out. The Holy Spirit will give us all the wisdom we need and the joy that comes from being rooted in God and God’s love.

Focus on Church Teaching

True wisdom comes from God alone. Jesus's parables of the Kingdom of God, which illustrate the precious gift that life in Christ is, help us to discern the value of the everlasting wisdom of God. The wisdom of God leads to a treasure of lasting and immense value—life in Christ now and in the age to come. We who have been instructed in the Kingdom have the responsibility to make it known to others as Jesus himself did, through his words and through his compassion and love (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 215–217).

Kingdom Bookmarks

You will need blank bookmarks or construction paper, scissors, and coloring materials to do this activity.

Have the young people cut out bookmark shapes. On one side of their bookmarks, ask them to draw one of the images from this Sunday's Gospel: the buried treasure or the pearl of great price. On the other side of the bookmark, have them write a description of how they would like to pursue the Kingdom of God. They may use these bookmarks to remind them about the Kingdom of God whenever they do some spiritual reading.

Buying the Kingdom

You will need index cards and writing materials to do this activity. You may want to have music quietly playing while the young people work.

In this Sunday's Gospel, the people give up everything that they have in order to pursue the Kingdom. Often in our lives, we find ourselves pursuing other sorts of treasure or goals that can distract us from pursuit of the Kingdom. Ask the young people to write a description of what they might need to give up or stop doing in order to pursue the Kingdom more fully.

Prayers and Blessings at Home

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 27, 2014

Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Prayer for the Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Good and generous God, in Christ you
have revealed your kingdom to us,
a treasure hidden in a field,
a pearl of great price.
Grant us your Spirit's gift of discernment,
that we may learn to distinguish aright
between the passing wealth of this
present world
and the enduring value of your kingdom.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus
Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.
Amen.



Lectionary Readings

1 Kings 3:5, 7–12
Psalm 119:57, 72, 76–77,
127–128, 129–130
Romans 8:28–30
Matthew 13:44–52 or
13:44–46

Family Blessing

Take time this week to linger at the end of a family meal or at bedtime to bless one another with a hug, a kiss, or a look that expresses God's love through your love.

Living the Liturgy at Home

As a family, talk about whether your lives are reflective of the importance of faith in Christ. How does your family put Mass, participation in Reconciliation, and time for prayer first? What about service to the poor, ill, or those in need of care? How do you reverence one another as a sign of reverence for God? What about care of the environment through family activity and action? How do all of these acts help you to put God and God's ways first? Create a family list of priorities and related behavior, and post the list in a prominent place at home as a reminder.