

Sunday's

READINGS

Wisdom 2:12, 17–20
James 3:16–4:3
Mark 9:30–37

Scan the code to read
today's readings. ➔



Opening PRAYER

*Change my heart, O Lord,
that I may move from thinking
only of my will to trusting in
your will for me and for the
world. Amen.*



Thoughts for REFLECTION

Discuss the thought
process you employ when
you make a decision for
yourself or your family.

Name the obstacles that
would prevent you from
resolving a conflict with
someone who has harmed
you.



What You NEED to KNOW

Scripture Background

Wisdom 2:12, 17–20

The writer of the Book of Wisdom speaks in the voice of the wicked speaking about a righteous (holy) man, whose goodness is a thorn in their side. The wicked employ a test. They will torture the holy man and put him to death. If he is a son of God, God will take care of him. The reference to the son of God here is not a reference to the Second Person of the Trinity. The Israelites used the term *sons and daughters of God* to refer to themselves. In this passage, the writer is using that phrase to refer to this man who is good and just.

James 3:16–43

We will explore three separate thoughts in this reading. In the first, James uses the word *disorder* to describe sin. This is a reality of sin that we often ignore. God's created order is harmony and peace. Sin disorders God's plan. The effects of sin disorder our personal lives and disorder our communal lives. Second, James identifies the cause of war in our inability to deal with our personal conflicts. As disciples, if we are not in the practice of examining our own thoughts, words, and deeds, how can we

be sure they are not disordered? Finally, in the last verse, James tells his community that if they ask God for whatever is in his plan, they will receive it. Like any good parent, God will give his children what they need, or what is good for them.

Mark 9:30–37

In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus refer to the Son of Man. This title is not a reference to Jesus' humanity. It is a reference to Daniel, an Old Testament prophet, who has a vision that the Ancient of Days (God the Father) will send the Son of Man (the Messiah). The Israelites understood this to mean that God would send a king with supernatural powers who would free them from the oppressors, who, at this time, were the Romans. The messiah would rule. Peace and justice would reign. When Jesus speaks about suffering, it makes no sense to the disciples. Proof of their lack of understanding is evident as they argue about which one of them would be the most powerful in Jesus' Kingdom. Jesus tries to be clearer. He embraces a child as an example of the need to embrace God's plan.

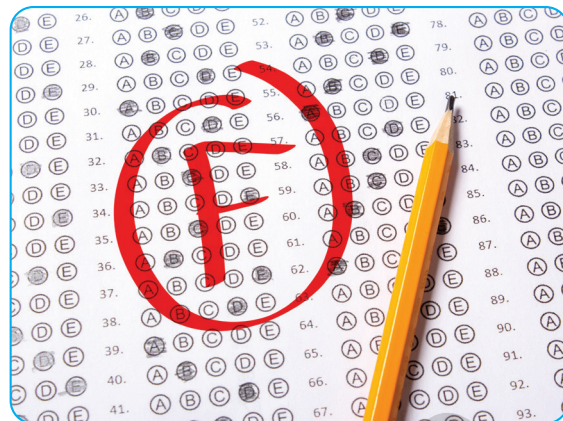


Points to Ponder

Did I Pass?

In the reading from the Book of Wisdom, the wicked want to test the good person. Can he really remain faithful if he experiences torture and death? We may have heard people in our lives say, “God is testing you.” Whether it is evil or God who is doing the testing, the presumption is that you will either pass or fail. Passing gets you to Heaven. Failing gets you to Hell. The problem with this thinking is that it is not in harmony with the teaching or the life of Jesus. The whole of our spiritual life cannot be based on failing or passing a test. Holiness is the journey into deeper and deeper relationship with Jesus. Difficulties and challenges will arise. They come from various sources. When these come into our lives, a disciple’s questions are “What can I learn about God from this?” and “What is this experience teaching me about myself and my relationship to God?” The person who asks these questions is truly wise.

- If a person changes his or her perspective from God as test-giver to God as wisdom, how would that change the person’s relationship with God?



There is nothing so great as the Eucharist. If God had something more precious, He would have given it to us.

—Saint John Vianney

Strengthen belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Scan here for Pflaum Eucharist resources. ➡



Connecting **GOSPEL**

and CHURCH TEACHING

God, the Giver of Life

God does not test your faith. He uses all situations and people to increase your faith. Remembering that faith is not a thing but a relationship, you can recognize that God is also trying to offer you a good. In every situation, the Holy Spirit is urging you to choose the grace God offers. God does not do evil. God allows it and at the same instant invites you to allow him to redeem it. The image of God as a cruel boot camp officer who just wants to see if he can break you is the absolute opposite of a God who

is willing to die on the Cross to save us. A Church document entitled “The Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of Life” describes the Holy Trinity in this way: “[T]he three divine persons in one God are committed to the same mission: to accompany humanity in the discovery of love, and to the understanding of who God is” (p. 20). Jesus has revealed that what God desperately desires for us is a life in communion with him.

➡ To learn more, refer to CCC, 142–155 or go to Booklet 5, Session 3 in *Growing Faith*.



Closing PRAYER

Holy Spirit, you are the Giver of Life. Teach us that life begins in the love of the Trinity. Each day, we are invited to know your presence and your love in a deeper way. Amen.

FAMILY CORNER

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Question of the Week

How can you serve others and help them with difficulties they are experiencing?



Family Prayer

Lord, help us to see you when we see people in need. Amen.

AWAKEN

November 17, 2024

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Becoming Disciples of the Word

Sunday's READINGS

Daniel 12:1-3
Hebrews 10:11-14, 18
Mark 13:24-32

Scan the code to read
today's readings. ➡



Opening PRAYER

I want to offer each day, Jesus, my Savior, to the awesomeness of your plan for me. Amen.



Thoughts for REFLECTION

Whose guidance do you seek in discovering God's plan for you?

When are times when you might need help to forgive yourself?



What You NEED to KNOW

Scripture Background

Daniel 12:1-3

The Book of Daniel is complicated by many factors. The Jews do not consider Daniel a prophet because God did not speak to him personally. They believe that God spoke to Daniel in dreams, not visions. The Book of Daniel is considered apocalyptic literature. The word *apocalyptic* comes from the Greek. It describes literature that seeks to give insight primarily through symbolism into the revelation of God's mysteries. You are probably familiar with the apocalyptic Book of Revelation, the last book in the New Testament. Daniel sees Michael the Archangel, who guards Israel and is assured the Israelites will return from the exile. In his final thoughts, we hear one of the few references in the Old Testament to the resurrection of the dead.

Hebrews 10: 11-14, 18

As we continue to listen to readings from the Letter to the Hebrews, we reflect on the priesthood of Christ and are reminded once again that in his perfect sacrifice, Jesus took the sin of the world past, present, and future with him to the Cross. Our assurance that if we seek

forgiveness all sin can be forgiven flows from this understanding. When we reflect on the harm we have caused by our sin, it should be a comfort to know that while we ourselves cannot fix it, Jesus did that for us. Because of the love of our Savior, his grace can heal and restore all the brokenness of this world.

Mark 13:24-32

Taking the first verses of this Gospel out of context, one can understand why many people have an image of the end time as one of destruction. Jesus is using apocalyptic images to emphasize the reality of an end time. The term "Son of Man" is a reference to Daniel 7. The Son of Man symbolically reveals the mysteries of God and eternity. Partnering the last verses with the first, we hear this truth expressed with intensity: Are we ready for the last day, the end times? We need not fear the chaos and destruction that symbolize the end. We are being told to focus our lives each day on the sole purpose of our creation, an eternity of the fullness of love with God.





Points to Ponder

The Eyes of Love

So many images of our death, our personal end time, involve physical pain and suffering, with fire and burning as symbols. This is particularly offered in some of the private revelations of saints. Theologians and biblical scholars offer a different perspective. In his encyclical *In Hope*, Pope Benedict XVI summarizes this understanding. "Some recent theologians are of the opinion that the fire which both burns and saves is Christ himself, the Judge and Savior. The encounter with him is the decisive act of judgment. Before His gaze all falsehood melts away. This encounter with Him, as it burns us, transforms and frees us, allowing us to become truly ourselves.... His gaze, the touch of His heart heals us through an undeniably painful transformation 'as through fire.' But it is a blessed pain, in which the holy power of His love sears through us like a flame, enabling us to become totally ourselves and thus totally of God" (47). Perhaps the words of Saint Paul, "At present, we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12) are about looking at ourselves through the eyes of Christ.

- How does becoming totally ourselves differ from becoming the best version of ourselves?



[Jesus] gives himself to you . . . to be your food and nourishment.

—Saint John Chrysostom

Strengthen belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Scan here for Pflaum Eucharist resources. ➔



Connecting **GOSPEL**

and CHURCH TEACHING

Jesus Is the Complete Revelation

Jesus promised us that the Holy Spirit would make known all to us that he has revealed. We trust in Christ's promise and so welcome the developing understanding of the Church's teaching. It makes a distinction between public revelation and private revelation. "Throughout the ages, there have been so-called 'private' revelations, some which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not, however, belong to the deposit of faith.

It is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation" (CCC, 67). The phrase "deposit of faith" means the divinely revealed truths given to the Church through Sacred Scripture and Apostolic Tradition. The Church's Magisterium pronounces these truths in a definitive way. The Creed is an example of the deposit of faith. We are not obligated to believe private revelation.

➔ To learn more, refer to CCC, 59–67 or go to Booklet 2, Session 2 in *Growing Faith*.



Closing PRAYER

Lord, often when I recognize the harm I have done, I am overwhelmed with my failure to love as I should. Help me to trust in your mercy. Amen.

FAMILY CORNER

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Question of the Week

What can you do every day this week to show Jesus he is welcome in your home and heart?



Family Prayer

Help us, Lord, to make loving choices every day as we wait for your return. Amen.

Sunday's

READINGS

Isaiah 62:1-5

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

John 2:1-11

Scan the code to read today's readings. ➔



Opening PRAYER

Your love for us, O Lord, is unimaginable, like the amount of wine at Cana. Help us to be aware of your abundant generosity as we journey through our lives. Amen.



Thoughts for REFLECTION

How does our culture view the gifts and talents an individual possesses?

How can you make yourself more conscious of your call to live for the Kingdom?



What You NEED to KNOW

Scripture Background

Isaiah 62:1-5

It is a safe guess that this passage from Isaiah was written upon the return from the Babylonian exile. Isaiah speaks in God's voice to the people he refers to as "Jerusalem" and "Zion." Zion was a specific place on a hilltop within the city of Jerusalem. Symbolically it represented the dwelling place of God. Notice the verses where God changes the Israelites' names from "Forsaken and Desolate" to "My Delight and My Espoused." Naming is significant in Scripture. If you have the power to name, you signify your relationship with a person or thing. How beautiful that God calls his people "My Delight." His forgiveness of their unfaithfulness is a shining light about his mercy. That light is what will attract others to him.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Corinth was a seaport city that was home to many peoples from many nations. Saint Paul is especially fond of this community and yet he regularly must call them to remember what it means to be a disciple. In this reading, Paul is scolding the community for thinking that the individual gifts they possess come with a hierarchy of importance. In addition,

according to Paul, the members of this community seem to believe that their gifts are generated within themselves. Paul is passionate about the source and the purpose of their gifts. God is the source of every gift. He gives gifts for the good of the community. One is not more important than the others. They all work together to advance his plan of salvation.

John 2:1-11

This is Jesus' first miracle recorded in John's Gospel and it is only recorded in his Gospel. The passage is familiar to us. Yet, a few details may offer deeper insight. Each of the six stone jars held twenty to thirty gallons of water. Servants would use the water to clean the feet of the guests as a sign of hospitality. Guests would have walked to the celebration, some from other villages, as Mary and Jesus did. After an exchange with his mother, who is aware of the embarrassment that is about to befall the bride's parents, Jesus changes this water into fine wine. This is also an unimaginable amount of wine. Not everyone at the wedding was aware of the event. But the disciples were, and it led them to see Jesus as more than a rabbi, a gifted teacher who spoke with authority.



Points to Ponder

Teacher and Disciple

A focal point in the account of the wedding feast at Cana is the relationship between Jesus and his mother. This wedding could have been a wedding of a relative, since Mary is very aware of the family problem. It is important to remember that upon entering the celebration, Mary is the teacher and Jesus the student. As Jesus' mother, Mary, along with Joseph, has formed the boy Jesus in the Covenant. She has supported and encouraged his relationship with God the Father. Mary, a servant of the Kingdom teaches Jesus through her awareness that the family needs help. Jesus, seems to be telling his mother that it is not yet time for him to reveal the Father's power in him. She disagrees and lets Jesus know that she believes. Mary who arrived at the wedding as a teacher, leaves it as a disciple.

- Has anyone ever intervened on your behalf when you needed assistance but were reluctant to ask? What effect did the experience have on you?
- When have you experienced a transformation from teacher to disciple?



Holy Communion assures me that I will win the victory. . . . The bread of the Strong gives me all the strength I need to carry on my mission and to do whatever the Lord asks of me.

—Saint Faustina Kowalska

Strengthen belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Scan here for Pflaum Eucharist resources. ➔



Connecting GOSPEL

and CHURCH TEACHING

Mary Leads Us to Her Son

Non-Catholics sometimes misunderstand and misrepresent the honor Catholics give to Mary. That reality may be aided by observing some of the practices they see concerning Mary and the saints. Catholics have a very special devotion to Mary. "In a wholly singular way [Mary] cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls" (*Lumen Gentium*, 61). "This very special devotion ...

differs essentially from the adoration which is given to the Incarnate Word (Jesus) and equally to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and greatly fosters this adoration" (CCC, 971). From her womb, God is embodied. Mary prays with us that we will be faithful disciples. Her role in salvation, is always to point to her Son.

➔ To learn more, refer to CCC, 142–155 and 971 or go to Booklet 4, Session 3 in *Growing Faith*.



Closing PRAYER

Dear Lord, my prayer this day is to give you reason to call me your "Delight."
Guide my words and actions today. Amen.

FAMILY CORNER

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Question of the Week

How can you know what Jesus wants you to do?



Family Prayer

Jesus, help us to be obedient, just like you were to your mother. Help us to do what you teach us. Amen.

Sunday's

READINGS

Genesis 15:5–12, 17–18
Philippians 3:17–4:1
Luke 9:28b–36

Scan the code to read
today's readings. ➔



Opening PRAYER

*We ask, Holy Spirit, that you help
us to stand firm in our faith.
Clear away any obstacle that
might make us stumble. Amen.*



Thoughts for REFLECTION

Imagine if your passport
said, "Country of origin:
Kingdom of God." How do
you live as an American
while being a citizen of the
Kingdom of God?

Is it a challenge to make
your faith your number
one priority? Why?



What You NEED to KNOW

Scripture Background

Genesis 15:5–12, 17–18

In this passage from Genesis, we are given a glimpse into the sacred covenant that God made with Abraham, whose name here is the original *Abram*. God will eventually change Abram's name to "Abraham." Prior to this account, God called Abraham to move from his own land to Caanan, a foreign land. God promised to make Abraham the father of a great nation. Abraham was old and had no children. Chapter 15 begins with Abraham questioning God about his lack of children. God replies by asking him to look at the stars of the sky and see them as a symbol of all his descendants. To assure Abraham of his commitment, God asks for the animals to be split in two. This was a common practice in binding people in a promise. This was a blood sacrifice in which both parties would walk through the blood of the animals. The fire that is an image of God moves through the path to give Abraham a sign of God's commitment to him and his people.

Philippians 3:17–4:1

Paul addresses the Philippians as a teacher. Contrary to the adage we may have heard, "Do as I say,

not as I do," Paul is saying, "Do as I do." But he advises the disciples to imitate not just his example, but that of all who have become followers of Christ. Do not seek the things that will not satisfy you. You are citizens of God's Kingdom. While we wait for Jesus to return and bring about the fullness of God's plan, live as if it is already here.

Luke 9:28b–36

The account of the Transfiguration appears in Mark, Matthew, and Luke's Gospels. Luke gives attention to the conversation between Elijah and Moses. In Verse 30, we read that the two men spoke of Jesus' departure, which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. We know by this point in the Gospel that Jesus has begun speaking about his suffering and Death. The response by the disciples is disbelief. That was not the ending of what they had been taught about the Messiah. They miss the message again as they are asleep. They awaken at the end just in time to see the last moments of the vision. Peter, as we now expect, responds in an inappropriate way. He suggests to Jesus that they prepare three tents, as if God or this experience could be captured.



Points to Ponder

Patience Is Indeed a Virtue

With all the talk of kingdoms in the Scripture today, how do we apply the Word to our personal spiritual journey? Peter may lead us to the questions we need to ask ourselves. The Gospel today tells us about Peter that “he did not know what he was saying.” Imagine that. The man who would become the leader of the early Church once again is baffled. It seems that Peter keeps missing the point. We should take great comfort in recognizing that Peter is given to us as a model of faith. He is proof positive that faith is a lifelong journey. Through him we know that God has unlimited patience with us, as long as we keep trying. Remembering that faith is a relationship, we can look at the mutual patience needed in the relationships of love between spouses, parents, and children, and among friends and family.

- What are some other times in Scripture when Peter misunderstood Jesus’ teaching?
- What are some ways you work at being patient?



In the Eucharist, the sacrifice of Christ is made present, and the sacrifice of Christ is the fullest expression of the love of the Father and the Son.

—Bishop Robert Barron

Strengthen belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Scan here for Pflaum Eucharist resources.



Connecting GOSPEL

and CHURCH TEACHING

The Struggle For Land

The words of Genesis 15:7 have been a challenge since these words were written: “I am the Lord, who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as a possession.” Over the centuries, conflicts have arisen over that land. But to whom is God speaking? Strictly to Abraham? To Abraham and his immediate descendants? Or to all the descendants of Abraham and Isaac across the generations? Of course, before Christ, those descendants would have primarily consisted of Jewish people, though certainly one can reasonably imagine that not all the people who

inhabited and cultivated the land were, in fact, Jewish. Things become more complicated when we consider that Christ himself and many of the first Christians were Jewish. Which of Abraham’s descendants did God intend the land for—only those who came before Christ and their descendants? Jews, Christians, and Muslims, three Abrahamic faiths, have a deep spiritual attachment to the Holy Land. Surely, the God of Abraham, is benevolent to all his children and desires justice and dignity for all his people.

➔ To learn more, refer to CCC, 156–175 or go to Booklet 4, Session 4 in *Growing Faith*.



Closing PRAYER

How often when I pray for patience, Lord, do I not remember your time is not our time? Help me to live fully in the present moment. Amen.

FAMILY CORNER

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Question of the Week

How can you listen to Jesus? What might he say to you?



Family Prayer

Open our ears and hearts to better hear you, Lord. Amen.