

# TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year B

Joshua 24:1-2a, 15-7, 18b  
Psalm 34:2-3, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21  
Ephesians 5:2a, 25-32  
John 6:60-69

## Gathering

*(An unlit candle, a Bible open to this week's gospel and an artistic representation of Jesus are placed on a table.)*

## Prayer

*(The candle is lit. The leader invites the members to a time of silent attention to the presence of the Holy Spirit. After a period of quiet, the prayer continues with several members offering the following prayers on behalf of all based on thoughts from Pope Francis.)*

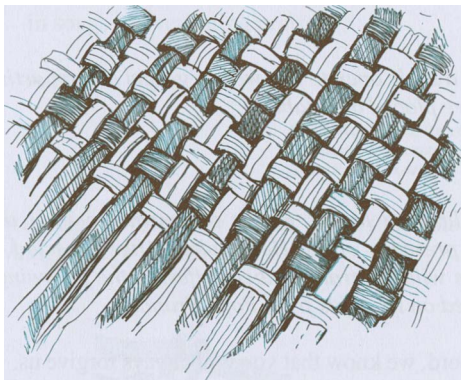
- I: Lord, we know that you will always forgive us. Help us gain the faith in you that causes us to ask for your forgiveness.
- II: Lord, we are called to be you to others. Help us to minister to your people so that, like the Good Shepherd, we take on the reality of the smell of your sheep.
- III: Lord, you are to be seen in everyone. Help us to be moved by the tragedies of all those around us, no matter how marginalized. Help us to reach out to ease others' pain.

*(A selection of instrumental music is played.)*

## HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

*(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)*

*When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. Pausing between them, the leader then poses these two questions: “What draws you to this gospel?” “Where do you resist this gospel?” The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)*



## Reflection

“Master, to whom shall we go?” Have you ever been fed up with “the church”? The problem sometimes is a local priest; sometimes it may be the chancery; sometimes it is Rome. Have you ever said, “Where shall I go?” Some people stay, but indifferently. Some people go. And then, for however frustrated, there are those for whom the church is in the marrow of their bones. “Master, to whom shall we go?”

Many would like to see greater modernization of the church. Pope Saint John XXIII brought us into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Pope Francis appears to be trying to bring us into the 21<sup>st</sup>. But what does that mean?

Jesus’ taught some things that were radical for his day. The fact of the matter is, they are still radical in ours. How can we eat his body and drink his blood? That is obviously a problem for some in our day just as it was for the Jews of his day. Jesus’ real presence in the Eucharist is a bedrock

Catholic belief. Jesus teaches other things that seem radical today, like marriage as a sacred bond.

Yes, the Church does need to modulate in some ways to meet the challenges of the 21st century, but the core is what really counts. The core is Jesus Christ and what he teaches. He teaches love, not condemnation. He teaches forgiveness, but also contrition. He teaches reaching out, not pulling back. He teaches mercy and justice. He teaches us to ask what will happen to others by our actions instead of what will happen to us. In the words of the classic rocker, Stephen Stills, he teaches that “we are supposed to be some kind of different”. How different are we from the ways of the world? If not that much, the answer to the question, “Where should we go?” is “To Jesus.”

### Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ Reflect on some teaching of Jesus that is hard for you.
- ◆ If not to Jesus, to whom would you go?
- ◆ What problems does living in today’s world cause difficulty for you in living your faith/religion?

### HEARING THE GOSPEL’S LORD

*(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: “What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?” “How are you/we being called to live in response to God’s word?” After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)*

### Response in Action Suggestions

- ◆ Invite a relative or friend who has been away from the church to join you at Mass this weekend.
- ◆ Set aside ten minutes each day this week for reflection and prayer. Let your prayer be: You have the words of eternal life, Lord. You are the Holy One of God.
- ◆ When the occasion presents itself, speak some words of encouragement to someone who is otherwise alienated from church.

## Prayer

*(After a brief pause, the gospel or a portion of it, either of the other readings as appropriate or the responsorial psalm are proclaimed. The idea is to select a text that lends itself to inviting members to the time of silent prayer that follows. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: “What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?” “What do you say to him in response?” The community pauses for a full five minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment.)*

*Following this sharing, several members offer the following prayers on behalf of all based on thoughts from Pope Francis.)*

- I: Lord, we know that faith doesn't scatter the darkness, but guides our steps in the night. When we suffer, you do not explain everything, but you promise us your presence which is goodness. It touches our suffering and gives us a light to live our lives by.
- II: Lord, remind us to smile when we talk to someone about you.
- III: Lord, we know that gossip hurts not only a person's reputation but also fills the gossip's heart with bitterness like the stomach of a child who eats too much candy. Teach us to speak kindly.
- IV: Lord, we know that the perfect family doesn't exist, it's just us sinners. Remind us to say often: “May I?” “Thank you.” “I'm sorry.”

*(Members join in singing, “The Church's One Foundation.” The song may be found on the Internet. When the song is complete the session concludes with the exchange of a sign of peace.)*