

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year C

Isaiah 66:18-21
Psalm 117:1, 2
Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13
Luke 13:22-30

Gathering

(An unlit candle, a Bible open to this week's gospel are arranged on a table in the gathering place. As members arrive, they place pictures of parents/grandparents they have brought with them on the 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 as follows.)

All: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
 And kindle in them the fire of your love.
 Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
 And you will renew the face of the earth.

Leader: Lord,
 by the light of the Holy Spirit
 you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
 In the same Spirit
 help us to relish what is right
 and always rejoice in your consolation
 We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Reflection

Have you ever noticed that *discipline* and *disciple* have the same Latin root, *disciplina*. It means *pupil*. While we commonly think of children as pupils, no matter what we might think, regardless of our age, we are all still

pupils, students of life. We study life in all its complexities. We study history to learn about where we came from. We study science to understand how we got here. We study philosophy to understand the meaning of things. As people of faith, we study theology to understand ultimate things. Theology is faith seeking understanding.

As Christians, we are disciples of Jesus Christ. As disciples, we are pupils of Christ. We study his word. We listen to his voice. And in doing so, he teaches us to find our way “through the narrow gate.”

Children often do what their parents tell them because they are afraid of the punishment that they will receive if they don't. Love sometimes chastises to protect. Until my mother died, I still did what my mother said – not because I was afraid of what she would do to me – but because I loved her and I was afraid of what I would do *to her* by my disobedience.

Life itself has a way of chastising us from time to time. When we act against life's basic values, it has a way of calling us up short. God works through the events of life. Paul tells us: “God treats you as sons. For what ‘son’ is there whom his father does not discipline?” While some people grow up fearing God, because they think God is there to punish us, hopefully, we have come to see God as a loving parent who disciplines to teach. Each day presents us with new opportunities to learn, to do what God asks of us. “Endure your trials as ‘discipline,’” Paul tells us. When we do, “the peaceful fruit of righteousness” awaits us in God's good time.

Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ What has being disciplined taught you?
- ◆ For better or worse, how have your parents influenced your image of God?
- ◆ How do you relate to God today? As judge, as father?
- ◆ What have been the benefits of mental, physical or spiritual discipline in your life?

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

- ◆ Help a young person develop parenting skills. Volunteer at a local office of Birthright (www.birthright.org or 1-800-550-4900).
- ◆ Discipline yourself in prayer this week by taking 10 minutes each day to just listen for God. Sit down and do nothing. Ask nothing, just listen.
- ◆ If your parents are still living, call them to say thank you for the guidance they have given to you over the years. If they have died, pray your thanks for them and share a story of what you have learned from them with a child in your life.

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.

When this sharing is complete, prayer concludes as follows.)

Discipleship Prayer

All: Loving God,
I thank you for choosing me to be your disciple
and for the gift of your Son, Jesus.
Help me proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel
by word and by deed today and every day.
Open my heart to the outcast, the forgotten,

the lonely, the sick and the poor.
Grant me the courage to think, to choose and to live as a
Christian,
joyfully obedient to You.

Amen.

Adapted from a homily of Pope Francis, Basilica
of St. Paul Outside-the-Walls, April 14, 2013.

(The session concludes with the exchange of a sign of peace.)

