



a Kendall Hunt Company

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, Junior High - RCLB Lectionary



Junior High Session

Deuteronomy 6:2-7

Mark 12:28-34

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

O Lord, You always love us, no matter how often we stumble and fall. Even when we sometimes give up on ourselves, you never do. Keep us strong and help us to think of others and love them the way you do. We know that some people are difficult and make it especially hard to show them your love. Even if they annoy us, hurt us, or just don't want us to care, give us the strength to love them anyway. This and all things we ask in the name Jesus,

Amen.

Opening Life Reflection



Today's gospel tells us that we are to love God first and then we are to love all people as much as we love ourselves. Fill a number of lunch bags with one item in each. Items might include a one dollar bill, a baby bottle, a sandal or shoe, a toothbrush, a postage stamp, a box of tissues. Distribute a bag to each person and have the person consider the item in the bag. Individually or as a group, think about ways in which that article reminds us of someone who needs love.

- What do we do to get the strength to love people who are difficult to love?
- Is there a chance that the love we show to someone can change that person?
- Has someone's love ever changed you?

Allow time for discussion. We know that God loves us and we know God's love through other people. Other people know God's love through us.

Listening to the Word of God

In Deuteronomy we learn of the great Jewish prayer called the *Shema*. In this prayer, Jewish people remember every day to love God.



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Read Deuteronomy 6:2-6

Allow for silence.

Scripture Discussion Starters

- Through Moses, what does God tell the Israelites to do?
- How were the Israelites told to show their love to God?
- What did Moses tell the people would happen if they obeyed the command?

In this gospel reading, a scribe asks Jesus what the most important commandment is. Through this scripture we learn that loving God is the most important thing followed by the command to love others as much as we love ourselves.

Read Mark 12:28-34.

Allow for silence.

Scripture Discussion Starters

- What did the scribe want to know?
- How did Jesus answer the scribe?
- Why do you think Jesus stated these as the two most important commandments?

Scripture Background

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings using the Catechist Background section.

For hundreds of years, right up until today, many Jewish people pray the words found in the reading from Deuteronomy. It is called the *Shema*, and is prayed twice a day. The words remind people to love God with every part of their very being—with their heart, their soul, and all their strength. The love described in this reading is not so much an emotion as it is a way of life. It demands devotion and obedience to God.

When the Jewish scribe asks Jesus “what is the greatest commandment,” Jesus remembers the ancient words from the Torah. Even though the Jewish people find 613 commandments in their laws, Jesus tells the man that loving God is the most important thing we can do. The next most important commandment is to love others as we love ourselves. Before Jesus left the scribe, he asked the scribe if he understood. The scribe repeated the laws to Jesus. Jesus told him that he was correct, and if he lived those laws, he would surely be in the Kingdom of God.

Questions for Deeper Reflection

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- What are some things we do to take care of and respect ourselves?
 - Are there some things about ourselves that might be hard for others to love?
 - How can we help ourselves love people who are difficult to love?

*If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the **Gospel in Life**.*

Doctrinal Discussion Starters

Command to Love God and Neighbor

As Catholic Christians we are commissioned to show God's love to the world. We show our love of God by loving other people. We can bring about peace in our world by loving others and caring for them in the same way we love ourselves and care about ourselves. If we truly love God, we can only show this by the way we treat and love others. We can only love others if we first love God. It is through our unconditional love of God that we know how to love others unconditionally. And it is through this love that the Kingdom of God begins on earth.

- What is the greatest commandment?
- How can living that commandment bring about the Kingdom of God?
- Why must we love God first before anything or anyone else?

Sacrament Connection

As Catholics we believe that the sacraments in general and Eucharist in particular help us show God's love in the world. We receive Eucharist and through it, Jesus becomes a part of us. When we leave church and go into the world, we take Jesus with us. Jesus is inside of us and we witness Jesus' love to others by serving them, loving them, and caring for them as we love and care for ourselves.

The Gospel in Life

Think of someone who is unloved (at least some of the time and maybe even by you!). It might be someone in your school, neighborhood, or even in your own family. Do something this week that will help them see God's love through you.

Connecting to Faith First® Legacy Edition

At Home Family Guide, theme 13
Junior High, Morality, chapter 9



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Junior High, Jesus in the New Testament, chapter 9

