Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, Junior High - RCLB Lectionary

Junior High Session

Ezekiel 18:25-28

Matthew 21:28-32

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

Lord God, guide us in all our decisions.

Help us to do the right thing.

Give us the faith to follow wherever you lead us.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

Opening Life Reflection

The topic for today is moral decision-making. Invite the young people to reflect on people they admire. Brainstorm with them what qualities these people possess. Write down their responses. Then invite the youngsters to brainstorm what qualities of Jesus they admire most. Write down their responses. Discuss:

• How do the people you admire show you how to live?
• How is Jesus an example of how to live in the world?

• How can the decisions you make show that you follow Jesus?

Allow time for discussion. Jesus shows us the way to live. We show that we are followers of Jesus when we make good moral decisions.

Listening to the Word of God

In the Old Testament reading, listen to Ezekiel try to help the people of Israel do what is good and right.

Read Ezekiel 18:25-28.
Allow for silence.

Scripture Discussion Starters

• What complaint do the people have about God?
• How does Ezekiel respond to the people of Israel?
• What happens to the good person who turns away from righteousness?
• What happens when the wicked turn away from sin and do what is right?

In the gospel reading, listen to Jesus teach about the importance of a change of heart.

Read Matthew 21:28-32.
Allow for silence.

• What happens to the two sons in Jesus' story?
• What does the story teach about the importance of a change of heart?
• What point does Jesus make about the kingdom of God?

Scripture Background

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

In the first reading from the Old Testament, Ezekiel responds to the people's complaints about God being unfair. The people of Israel at this time in history believed in inherited guilt, which is the idea that blame for the fault of the parent falls on the children. Ezekiel attempts to show that each person is responsible for his or her own actions. A person who sins can actually have a change of heart and be forgiven. This message was important for the Israelites in exile to hear because it gave them hope.

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~~In today's gospel, Jesus tells a story about two sons who are faced with a moral decision. With~~ their decision to change course, Jesus helps his listeners recognize themselves in the story. With today's parable Jesus teaches that the kingdom of God is available to sinners just as much as it is available to the righteous. All that is needed is a decision for change, a change of mind and heart.

Questions for Deeper Reflection

• When do you find it difficult to understand God's ways?

• How does following Jesus demand action?

• When have you made a decision to change for the better?

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

Doctrinal Discussion Starter

Moral Decision Making

Living a moral life is about freely responding to a loving God. We are responsible for our choices. We have the freedom to choose what is right and what is wrong. We can turn to God to help us make good moral choices. God's law is written on our hearts. Catholics rely on Church tradition, scripture and the support of the teaching authority of the Church to help interpret God's law. Our conscience also helps us choose between right and wrong. God's voice calls us to do good and avoid evil. We call this inner voice our conscience.

Catholic teaching emphasizes that the morality of our actions depends on three things: The object, the intention, and the circumstances. First, the object of our moral act is what we knowingly choose to do or not do. The object may be good or evil. Second, the intention is our motive for choosing a moral act. Our purpose for doing the action affects the goodness or evil of the action. A good intention can not turn a morally evil act into a good act. The end does not justify the means. A bad intention, however, can turn a good act into an evil one. Third, the circumstances are the details surrounding the act. Circumstances increase or lessen the goodness or evil of a moral act. Catholic moral teaching holds that for an action to be judged as morally good, all three things, (the object itself, the intention, and the circumstances) must be good.

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Throughout our lives we are faced with moral choices. Church teaching can help us make good decisions. Through prayer, listening to Church teaching and seeking advice from people we trust, we can arrive at a good moral decision, in agreement with our conscience.

- How does Jesus show us how to live a moral life?
- What helps you arrive at a good moral decision?
- Why are we responsible for our choices?

Sacrament Connection

The sacrament of Baptism joins us with Christ. For those who have been baptized in Christ, God has revealed a way of living in the world. We live our baptism when we make good moral decisions.

The Gospel in Life

How can you make a good moral choice this week?