

Second Sunday of Easter, Year B, Junior High

Submitted by lectionaryadmin on Tue, 03/24/2015 - 20:00

Junior High Session

Acts 4:32-35
John 20:19-31

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.
Creator God,
You ask us to be peacemakers.
Help us treat one another with respect and love.
In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.
Amen.

Opening Life Reflection

The focus for today is the Challenge of Peace. To begin, place a globe or world atlas in the center of the meeting space. Provide index cards and markers for the youngsters. Brainstorm with the young people what peace means to them. Invite them to draw a symbol of peace on their index card. When they are done, have the youngsters come forward and place their symbols of peace around the globe or atlas. Discuss:

- How would you describe peace?
- Have you ever acted like a peace-maker? Explain.
- What kinds of things do peacemakers do?

Allow time for discussion. The call to live as a follower of Jesus includes being a peacemaker in the world. We are called to treat one another with respect and love. Peacemakers also work to change structures that make it hard for people to have what they need.

Listening to the Word of God

In the first reading from Acts, listen to how the first followers of Jesus lived together in peace.

Read Acts 4:32-35.
Allow for silence.

Scripture Discussion Starters

- How do the first followers of Jesus share their possessions?
- What do they preach about Jesus?
- How are the apostles provided with what they need to live?

In the gospel today listen to Jesus greet his friends with “peace.”

Read John 20:19-31.
Allow for silence.

- Why are the disciples meeting behind locked doors?

- What does Jesus come and say to his friends?
- How does Jesus help Thomas to believe?

Scripture Background

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

The first reading from Acts of the Apostles shows the beginnings of the early Church. The Holy Spirit is present with the first Christians. This is evident in their powerful testimonies about the resurrection of Jesus. They live in community, sharing with one another so that everyone has what they need. In today's passage we have a glimpse of the reign of God already present in the midst of the early Church.

In today's gospel the Risen Lord appears to his followers on the evening of the resurrection, when they are gathered behind locked doors, afraid. He greets his friends with a greeting of "peace" and he commissions them to go out and continue his own saving work. Jesus gives the Spirit to his followers and through the Holy Spirit they are given the power to forgive sins. Jesus' greeting, "peace be with you," calms the fears of the disciples and empowers them to bring peace into the world. Followers of Jesus today are given the same task, to work for justice and spread forgiveness and peace throughout the world.

Questions for Deeper Reflection

- Where do you see signs of God's presence in the Church today?
- When are you afraid to stand up for what you believe?
- How can Jesus help you to act as a peacemaker in the world?

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

Doctrinal Discussion Starter

The Challenge of Peace

God created the world and all living things. War, terrorism, and the use of weapons, nuclear, biological, or chemical, threatens the existence of God's creation. The Church's teaching on peace addresses the real devastating effects of war and violence on human lives.

Catholic teaching on the challenge of peace is rooted in scripture. In the Old Testament we learn that peace is not merely the absence of conflict. Peace is living in right relationship with God and God's people. Peace is living with others in such a way that brings about the well-being of individuals and the whole community. The Hebrew word shalom refers to a total harmony with nature, God and self. In the New Testament, Jesus brings the gift of peace to the Church.

Church teaching defends the sacredness of all human life. In 1983, the United States bishops issued a pastoral letter on war and peace, "The Challenge of Peace." In the letter the bishops point out the horrors of nuclear war. They teach that the use of nuclear weapons against a general population is immoral. More recently, Pope John Paul II has spoken about peace. He has addressed the evils that threaten peace in our world and has challenged world leaders to make decisions that value life. Our understanding of peace is founded on respect for all human life.

- What does the Church teach about peace?
- What does it mean to value and respect human life?



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- Why are Christians called to be peacemakers?

Sacrament Connection

In the Eucharist the Spirit joins us with Christ and one another in giving praise and thanksgiving to God for the blessings of creation and salvation. We go forth from Eucharist with a command to “Go in peace.” Sharing in the Eucharist helps us to live as peacemakers in the world.

The Gospel in Life

What action can you take this week to promote peace?

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