

Possible tie-ins between the Evangelization Initiative Guides for Season 4 - Witness and the readings for Sundays, 2008

Prior to Lent:

January 5/6, 2008, Epiphany of the Lord
Lectionary #20

The word “epiphany” means “manifestation.” In today’s Gospel story we have the manifestation of Jesus as Savior of all the nations as symbolized by the coming of the magi from far away lands to give him homage. How does Jesus become known and loved by people from all nations today? It happens through the witness of people who already know and love Jesus – people like you and me. The way we live our lives should give evidence to the Christ who dwells within us.

The Evangelization Initiative that we have experienced for the past three years continues this Lent as we look at the question, “How does my life witness to the presence of Jesus Christ in the world?” You are invited to sign-up after Mass today to be a part of small discussion groups on this faith topic. (Specific information about signing-up can be given here.)

January 12/13, 2008, Baptism of the Lord
Lectionary #21

The prophet Isaiah says that God’s chosen servant will bring justice to all people and be a light for all nations, opening the eyes of the blind, and freeing prisoners and those in darkness. Because of our own baptism, we have been called to live as followers of that chosen servant, Jesus Christ. Our lives give witness to our belief in the Gospel message of Jesus as we learn more about loving one another.

The archdiocese is continuing the Evangelization Initiative for a fourth season this Lent, looking at how our lives give witness in the world to Christ. People are invited to sign up for small group discussions about our faith. The overall goal of this effort is to make “Jesus Christ known and loved in our time by choosing to live out the Gospel in every moment.” By being involved in these small groups, we hope that you will grow closer to the one of whom God said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Information can be given here about how to sign up.)

January 19/20, 2008, Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
Lectionary #64

Saint Paul says to the Corinthians and to us, “To you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy, . . . Grace to you and peace.” To be holy means to be set apart to do God’s work. We are all members of the Body of Christ. We are the hands and feet and voice of Jesus in our world today.

The fourth season of the Evangelization Initiative which the archdiocese will begin this Lent is a call to make our lives every day a witness to the presence of Christ within us. To be holy is to live out the Gospel. It is not a choice we make just once. It is a choice we make every day, sometimes several times a day, as life situations happen. We make that choice when we show kindness to a person we would rather ignore. We make that choice when we fulfill our commitments to work and family and friends instead of deciding to take an easy way out. We make that choice when we decide to put someone else’s needs ahead of our own.

Choose to learn more about living the Gospel in every moment of your life by joining one of the Evangelization small groups this Lent.

January 26/27, 2008, Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
Lectionary #67

Saint Paul tells us today that he was sent by Christ to preach the Gospel “so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning.” In the Gospel, Jesus calls Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow him. “At once” they leave their nets and follow him.

Through our baptism, we are also called to follow Jesus. Following Jesus is never just about ones own personal choices. Following Jesus takes us into how we live in relationship to others: family, friends, coworkers, and even strangers. Because of our baptismal call we are all expected to learn everything we can about Jesus, grow in our relationship with him, and live out his message in the world through our relationships.

One way to help your faith life would be to get involved in the archdiocesan Evangelization Initiative this Lent, “How does my life witness to the presence of Jesus Christ in the world?” Sign up for a small group and see what you can learn about following Jesus.

February 2/3, 2008, Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Lectionary #70

Today’s Gospel, the Beatitudes, is one of the most quoted scripture passages. The Beatitudes teach us much about how we should be living our lives. Each of the Beatitudes is an examination of the attitudes and the actions of our lives. Be merciful and clean of heart and a peacemaker. Work to foster righteousness, following God’s will.

Poverty of spirit isn't just about being poor. It is about completely trusting God to meet all our needs because we know that we cannot do it on our own. If we live the Beatitudes now, we will help build heaven on earth.

If we live the Beatitudes, we are giving witness to Christ who lives within us. Season 4 of the Evangelization Initiative begins during Lent which is next week. Sign up now to be in one of our parish discussion groups.

February 9/10, 2008, First Sunday of Lent Lectionary #22

This week those of you in Evangelization small groups will be looking at how you give witness to the presence of Christ in your lives with family, friends, and coworkers. But it is not always easy to give that witness. We can be tempted to do or say the selfish thing rather than act as the hands and feet and voice of Christ in the world. Jesus was tempted in today's Gospel to take the easy way out and to do things that would satisfy his own needs. Jesus overcomes the temptations and chooses instead to rely on God's word. In small groups we will have a chance to figure out how we can better nurture the relationships in our lives and overcome temptations to selfishness.

We also are sending people to the cathedral (basilica) for the Rite of Election today. The bishop will be praying for these people who are soon going to be baptized (and/or are going to be received into the Church). They have been looking at the question of how to become like Christ in day-to-day life for many months now as they continue their faith journey to Easter.

February 16/17, 2008, Second Sunday of Lent Lectionary #25

The Gospel today is the story of the Transfiguration of Jesus. Peter, James, and John see Jesus in all his glory. Peter doesn't want the experience to end, but it must end. They come down from the mountain and Jesus continues ministering to the crowds of people.

This week small groups in the Evangelization Initiative are looking at the role social justice concerns play in our lives. Like Peter, we can have a desire to stay in a holy place instead of going out into the world to give witness to the message of Christ. It is easier to pray about injustice and poverty than it is to take concrete actions to end injustice and poverty. The groups will have the opportunity to seek ways that each person's gifts can be used to work on justice issues.

February 23/24, 2008, Third Sunday of Lent Lectionary #28

The Woman at the Well undergoes a transformation as she meets this stranger. She sees him first as a Jewish man, then as a prophet, and finally as the Messiah. She leaves her

water jar behind and runs to tell everyone in the town about her experience. She does not hold onto her knowledge, keeping it to herself. She feels a responsibility to tell others to “Come see” what she has seen.

The question for this week’s Evangelization groups is about something our bishops call “faithful citizenship.” “How in exercising my citizenship do I witness to and promote Gospel principles?” The bishops say that Catholic voters should approach elections and politics with an emphasis on the spiritual and moral as well as the economic and political. We must protect human life, promote family life, pursue social justice and practice global solidarity. The small groups will be discussing how we can follow the example of the Samaritan woman, not keeping our faith private, but bringing it into all aspects of our lives including citizenship: What issues do we need to speak about with others in our immediate and global neighborhood?

[The following paragraph can be used on the 4th and 5th Sundays as well when the Scrutinies are being celebrated.]

Our Elect, the people preparing for baptism at the Easter Vigil, will also be deepening their relationship with Jesus as we participate in a Scrutiny prayer with them today. The word, “scrutiny” may seem odd to us. This prayer is meant to uncover, and then heal all that is weak or sinful in the hearts of the Elect. It is meant to bring out, and then strengthen all that is upright, strong and good. Please join me in prayer for them.

March 1/2, 2008, Fourth Sunday of Lent Lectionary #31

At the time of Jesus people thought that physical disabilities and sickness were a direct result of sin, either of the person himself/herself or of the ancestors of the person. We see this in today’s Gospel as the crowd calls the blind man a sinner. Jesus overcomes this cultural bias and tells the people that no one sinned. He then heals the man bringing light both to the man and to the prejudice of the bystanders.

There are many things in our culture today that are inconsistent with Christian values. Evangelization groups have this question this week: “How do I witness to the Gospel so as to build on what is positive in the culture around me and change what is not?” Groups will be examining the contradictions in the Gospel message versus cultural messages.

March 8/9, 2008, Fifth Sunday of Lent Lectionary #34

From Gospel stories it appears that the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus was a “safe-house” for Jesus. This was a place where he could be himself among his closest friends. This is a place where he is accepted and his message is accepted by those friends. The death of Lazarus affects him deeply. He weeps when he hears the news. Like Jesus we

need to have close friends. We need a community of people who support us and love us and forgive us.

Small groups will be looking at the “Evangelizing Community” this week. Following Christian values in a culture that gives us many other messages is almost impossible alone. We grow by sharing our faith stories with one another. We know that the majority of people who join the Catholic Church as adults do so because of the witness of another person. Groups will be looking at what each person can do to make our community an evangelizing community.

We are now in the final week of the fourth year of the Archdiocesan Evangelization Initiative. Our overall goal has been, “Making Jesus Christ known and loved in our time by choosing to live out the Gospel in every moment.” In year four we are examining how we witness to Christ in our daily lives. Who could have been more of a witness than Lazarus who was brought back to life by Jesus? So too, we may have been dead to the words of Jesus, taking them for granted or not thinking about what they truly mean in our lives. But we can rise to new life when we are willing to stop and reflect and determine what we need to do in order to live out the Gospel in every moment of our lives.

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December 2007