

October 26, 2022

Dear CRE student,

We missed you at CRE on October 3rd! So that you keep up with the other people in your group, we ask that you complete the following:

1. Pray the following prayer:

Lord, we lift up in prayer members of our parish community and our friends who are not able to be with us tonight. We now ask you to be with us as well. Be with us as we hear a reading from the Bible that you inspired.

A Reading from Luke 9:23-25

*Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?"*

Prayer Leader:

Jesus gives us an invitation to follow Him as a disciple. He says that it is not easy, but says that following Him will bring life to us. We follow Him now, not only because of the promise of heaven, but because life with Him here and now is better than life without. He invites us to follow Him as disciples. Let's do so. Let's listen again to the verses from Luke's Gospel.

Reader:

*Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?"*

Prayer Leader:

Jesus, we thank you that loved us so much that you died for us on the cross. You have invited us to be your disciples. You have invited us to learn from you, to imitate you, and to become more like you. As we examine the cross today, help us to better understand what it means to follow you as we seek to know you, to live as a Church family, to be more like you, and to be a witness for you. We ask this through Christ who is Lord, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

2. Read the following:

The cross is the most common symbol in Christianity. It is the place where Jesus gave himself up for us. It is the symbol of humiliation that is the power of God. It can also serve as a model for discipleship and that is the topic and the model for the night.

There are four points to the cross and there is the body of Jesus as well. Each of these five points of reference mean something to those of us who are seeking to be followers of Jesus.

The first and very top point of the cross represents God. But God hasn't remained far off and above us. He has come to us in Jesus. He wants us to meet Jesus His son and to have a personal relationship with Him. That brings us to the second point, the bottom point of the cross.

God comes to us and wants us to have a real experience with Him. He wants us to have an encounter with His son and a real, living friendship with His Son. We can experience Him directly when we attend Mass or when we pray.

Our first sacramental encounter with Christ was in the sacrament of Baptism. In baptism, we were brought into union with Jesus and made a real member of His body. However, we are not the only one there. When we were brought into Jesus we were also brought into a human family: the Church. There are four aspects of the Church that I would ask us to consider: 1) the worldwide Roman Catholic Church 2) your parish 3) our families, the Church at home and finally 4) our youth program. Being a follower of Jesus makes us a member of Christ's body and asks us that we live in a good relationship with all the others who are members of His body.

The fourth reference is the body of Jesus himself. We mentioned that the bottom of the cross symbolizes Jesus coming to us and wanting a relationship with us. But a relationship with Jesus also means that we are asked to become more like Him. We are to love what Jesus loved as deeply as He loved.

The fifth point on the cross and final reference is the other end of the horizontal beam. This represents our outreach. Jesus said that His disciples are to "Go". St. Paul says that we are to be an ambassador for Christ. The US ambassador to Italy is to represent the US government to the people of Italy. Similarly, you are sent to your school to represent Jesus while you are there.

Remember there is no judgement as we approach our time together, but as we continue, we are going to do an honest evaluation of how we are doing as disciples.

3. Read and reflect on the following passages from the Bible:

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

*Now I am reminding you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you indeed received and in which you also stand. Through it you are also being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. After that he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one born abnormally, he appeared to me.*

This passage was written by St. Paul. He talked to all of the people who had an experience of Jesus. Then he said that he had his own experience of Jesus. Each of us are invited to have ongoing experiences of Jesus in our lives. That leaves us with these questions:

- 1) Do I pray?
- 2) Am I getting something out of Mass?
- 3) How am I experiencing Christ in my life?
- 4) Are there other things that I am doing to grow in my friendship with Christ?

The Left Point: Communion with the Church

1 John 4:7-12

*Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us.*

When we were baptized, we were brought into communion with Christ Jesus. We were also brought into communion with everyone who has ever been baptized. When God saves us, He is saving us as a community. That leaves us with these questions.

- 1) How do I feel about being Catholic?
- 2) How do I feel about being a member of my parish?
- 3) How are relationships in my family right now?
- 4) Do I think I'm fully loving the people in my life right now?

The Corpus: Changed to Be Like Jesus

Romans 12:1-2

*I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.*

St. Paul is using the word “conform”. He is saying that we are not to be changed into something other than Christ. Our lives should look more and more like Jesus. That leaves this question:

- 1) Am I growing to be more like Jesus?

The Right Point: Being an Ambassador for Christ

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

*And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

An ambassador is someone who goes into a country and serves as the voice of the president from a foreign country. As Christians, we are to be ambassadors wherever we go. That leaves the questions:

- 1) Do I make things better for others at school?
- 2) Even though I may not preach or lead Bible studies at school, would most people think I act like a Christian?

4. In the previous section, there were four reference points that were expanded upon. **Reflect on the following questions and submit the answers:**

- Where do you feel you are “Thriving” - which of the four areas do you identify as your strongest area? Why do you feel that way?
- Where you feel you are “Striving” - which of the four areas are you actively trying to work on? How are you working on that area?
- Where do you need the most work - which of the four areas in your life do you feel are in “Need of Reviving”? Why do you feel that way?

5. Closing Prayer

God who is the Father of us all, we offer thanks for all of the good things in our life: school, family, friends. We are grateful for the things that are most important to us and we ask for



your blessing on all of these things. May we judge wisely the things of Earth and love the things of Heaven. We pray this through Christ the Lord.

Matthew 6: 19-21.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Prayer Leader:

We come to God as people who are in need. As one family, we bring to you the people, the concerns, and prayers that we just talked about. Jesus instructed us to call you Father and so we pray. Our Father ...

Please complete and submit by our next class. You may email it to [rotramelm@stjohn23rd.org](mailto:rotramelm@stjohn23rd.org) or turn it in to your catechist/small group leader.

Peace and Blessings,

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