OTHER 1

A LIFE NIGHT ON

LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR

QUICK GLANCE

ABOUT THIS LIFE NIGHT

Jesus tells us that one of the greatest commandments is to "Love your neighbor as yourself." But what does it really mean to love your neighbor? There is a tendency to generalize this commandment — to make our neighbor the anonymous poor, hurting, or suffering segments of humanity who are far away. Yet our neighbors are the ones closest to us. The real flesh-and-blood people we see every day. It turns out, loving the human in front of us is a lot harder than loving humanity in general. This Life Night encourages teens to live out the command to love their neighbor by seizing the ordinary opportunities to love the people they are around every day.

MAIN POINTS

1. Jesus tells us that God's laws are summed up in two commandments: to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself. These define how to live.
2. Loving our neighbor doesn't just mean loving humanity in general or advocating for vague ideals about social justice. It means loving the real individuals present in our lives every day.
3. When we love the people around us, we learn to appreciate their dignity, are freed from the sadness that springs from selfishness, and experience the mysterious fulfillment that comes from imitating Jesus' self-sacrificial love.

SCRIPTURE

Leviticus 19:17-18 | Matthew 22:34-40 | Luke 10:25-37 | Romans 13:8-10 | 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 | 1 John 4:20-21

CATECHISM

1789 | 1807 | 1822-1829 | 1878 | 1931 | 2212

KEY TERMS

Charity | Justice | Neighbor

SAINTS

St. Francis of Assisi | St. Teresa of Calcutta | St. Therese of Lisieux

RESOURCES

Music
Spotify: “LS - Number One”

GOAL

The goal of this Life Night is to encourage teens to live out the command to love their neighbor by seizing the ordinary opportunities to love the people they are around every day.

ENVIRONMENT

Photos and images of saints who revealed what it means to love your neighbor in day-to-day life inspire the teens to live out the command to love their neighbor.

GATHER

Do You Love Your Neighbor?

This fun, active game gets teens moving and introduces them to the Life Night theme of caring for your neighbor.

PROCLAIM

Talk: Other 1

This talk begins by explaining the importance of following God's commands to lead a happy and full life. It then addresses the command to "love your neighbor as yourself," challenging teens to let this transform the way they treat the people around them every day. Teens are inspired to live out this command in imitation of Jesus, knowing that following him will lead to our greatest joy.

BREAK

Learning to Love

In small groups, teens are presented with various real-life scenarios and brainstorm ways they can love their "neighbors," especially when it is hard to choose to love.

SEND

The Perfect Neighbor

The Life Night concludes with a guided reflection on various stories from the Gospels in which Jesus shows us what it means to love our neighbor.

NOTES

GETTING READY

LIFE NIGHT DATE: _____

FOUR WEEKS BEFORE

- Read through the entire Life Night.
- Pray with the Scripture and Catechism references.
- Consult the Resources suggestions.
- Select a presenter for the Proclaim and contact them this week.
- Send the Proclaim Teaching Guide to the presenter.

TWO WEEKS BEFORE

- Assign core members to the tasks on the Core Meeting Worksheet.
- Check in with the Proclaim presenter and ask for an outline and slides, if applicable.
- Schedule practice time with the presenter if needed.

ONE WEEK BEFORE

- Distribute the Life Night outline to the core members.
- Pray with the core members over the Life Night.
- Review the highlights of the Life Night.
- Explain the core assignments.
- Encourage the core members to review the discussion questions and pray for their small group.

THE WEEK OF THE LIFE NIGHT

- Advertise the Life Night on the parish youth group's social media channels.
- Schedule the Parent Letter email as a follow-up to the Life Night.
- Make a plan for the Life Night Environment using the suggestions below.
- Gather the supplies needed for the Life Night.
- Inform core members of their roles during the session and provide them with the required materials and instructions.
- Pray for the teens who will be present and experience the Life Night.

THE DAY OF THE LIFE NIGHT

- Test all audio-video elements of the Life Night.
- Decorate the youth room using the Environment instructions below.
- Project an Environment image found online at lifeteen.com.
- Play the "LS - Number One" Spotify playlist as teens gather.

ENVIRONMENT

Inspire the teens and make the content tangible by hanging up images or photographs of saints who exemplified the command to love their neighbor. Step it up a notch by including short summaries of each saint's story. Be sure to include not only saints who were famous in their lifetimes and changed the world, like Mother Teresa or John Paul II, but also those who lived relatively quiet lives, like Therese of Lisieux or her parents, Louis and Zelie Martin.

Here are a few suggestions:

- St. Teresa of Calcutta
- St. John Paul II
- St. Therese of Lisieux
- Sts. Louis and Zelie Martin
- St. Damien of Molokai
- St. Francis of Assisi
- St. Martin de Porres
- St. Vincent de Paul
- St. Catherine of Siena
- St. John Vianney

SUPPLIES

	Images for the reflections in the Send
	Bibles

LIFE NIGHT PLANNER

SCHEDULE

TO-DO

ROOM LAYOUT

CORE MEETING WORKSHEET

Use this outline for your core team meeting before the Youth Mass. The core meeting follows the Gather-Proclaim-Break-Send structure.

CORE MEETING START TIME: _____

GATHER

- Begin with a brief social time and rapid high points/low points of the week from each core member.
- Pray with your core team and include one of the Scripture passages from the Life Night.
- Invite core members to share what it means to them to love their neighbor.

Scripture choice: _____

PROCLAIM

- Review the Life Night outline.
- Assign core members to the tasks for this Life Night and write their names in the Core Assignments chart on the next page.

BREAK

- Review the Life Night Break activity with a core member discussion. Spend about 15 minutes on this section.
- Take questions.

SEND

- Conclude the meeting with a Hail Mary.
- Set up final details for the Life Night.
- Arrive early to the Youth Mass to greet teens as they arrive.

CORE ASSIGNMENTS

Setup	1.	2.	3.
	4.	5.	6.
Check-In	1.	2.	3.
Audio-Video			
Opening Prayer			
Proclaim Presenter			
Closing Prayer			

NOTES

GATHER

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER 5 min

Gather in the main meeting space and welcome the teens to the Life Night. Introduce any teens attending for the first time, and begin in prayer.

DO YOU LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR? 10 min

Divide the teens into groups of 10-20 people. Arrange a circle of chairs for each group with one fewer chair than the number of players.

One person begins in the middle of the circle and asks a seated player, "Do you love your neighbor?" The seated player may answer "yes" or "no."

To answer yes, they must name both players sitting adjacent to them (e.g., "yes, I love my neighbors Jack and Sarah"). Those two players must then try to quickly swap seats without the person in the middle grabbing one of the vacated seats.

If the player answers no, they then follow up with the phrase, "but I love people…" and some characteristic (e.g., "no, but I love people who wear glasses" or "no, but I love people with white shoes"). Everyone in the circle who fits that description, including the person who answered, must get up and find a new seat. They may not sit in a chair directly next to where they started. The person who was in the middle also tries to grab one of the vacant seats.

In either case, whoever ends up without a seat becomes the new person in the middle. Continue playing the game as long as time allows.

SUGGESTION

Teenagers will always be teenagers, and sometimes they don't think before they speak or make inappropriate jokes. If you anticipate this being an issue with your teens during the game, be sure to remind them that all the categories should be appropriate and uplifting.

PROCLAIM

GETTING STARTED

This Teaching Guide is not just an outline; it's a tool to help you craft a powerful and personalized talk that will leave a lasting impact. You can make this topic relevant and engaging for your youth group, and this guide is here to assist you every step of the way. Don't just prepare the main points — unleash your creativity and incorporate media and Going Deeper content to captivate your audience and inspire the teens. Whether you use any suggested media or find your own, make sure it's visually engaging, attention-grabbing, and thought-provoking. Consult the Going Deeper section at the back of this resource and highlight the points that most resonate with your teens. Whenever presenting in front of a group, use a Bible or Catechism to read any passage rather than a digital copy or paper printout.

Beyond these guidelines, the most important thing is to be yourself and let the Holy Spirit guide you. Practice your talk, pour your heart into it, and trust that your authenticity and humility have the power to make a difference in the lives of these teens. If possible, record yourself giving the Proclaim and make notes on what you can improve or avoid. This guide is just the beginning — the rest is up to you!

MAIN POINTS

1. Jesus tells us that God's laws are summed up in two commandments: to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself. These define how to live.
2. Loving our neighbor doesn't just mean loving humanity in general or advocating for vague ideals about social justice. It means loving the real individuals present in our lives every day.
3. When we love the people around us, we learn to appreciate their dignity, are freed from the sadness that springs from selfishness, and experience the mysterious fulfillment that comes from imitating Jesus' self-sacrificial love.

KEY TERMS

Charity - The theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake and our neighbors as ourselves for the love of God. **(CCC 1822)**

Justice - Giving what is due to God and neighbor, a cardinal virtue. **(CCC 1807, 2095)**

Neighbor - The people near to us with whom we come in contact in our lives, including family, community, and anyone else we deal with day in and day out. **(CCC 1825, 1878, 2212)**

TEACHING GUIDE 15 min

Main Point 1:

Jesus tells us that God's laws are summed up in two commandments: to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself. These define how to live.

Begin by asking the teens to raise their hands if they have an iPhone. Then, instruct them to put their hands down and raise their hand if they have an Android.

- If your iPhone broke, would you go to the Samsung store to get it fixed? Or, would you take your Galaxy or your Google phone to the Apple store and say, "My phone isn't receiving texts, can you help?"
- Of course not. We know that because Apple made our iPhone, they are the ones who will know how to fix it. They know how to make sure it works its best, and they even give us "tips" with every software update and insights on the cool things the phone can do.
- They also tell you things not to do with your iPhone, like throw it in a lake. That would be bad for the iPhone.
- This principle is generally true: the person who made something knows what is best for it and how to make it work at its highest capacity.

SCRIPTURE

Project and read **Genesis 1:26-27** or invite a leadership teen to read it.

- God made us in his image and likeness. He created us out of nothing, simply because he wanted to love us.
- Since God created us, we can trust that he knows how we work! He knows what will lead us to our deepest fulfillment and happiness, and he doesn't leave us to figure it out on our own. He gives us instructions on how to flourish and be the happiest and holiest we can be. **(CCC 27)**
- These instructions are contained in Scripture and the Tradition of the Church. They are interpreted and made known to us by the Magisterium, or the teaching authority of the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

- Many of these instructions take the form of commandments in which God tells us the things we need to do or avoid to live the best life.
- At one point in the Gospels, a man approaches Jesus and asks about the commandments God had given the people. He wanted to know which commandments were the most important. Let's take a look at the story.

SCRIPTURE

Project and read **Matthew 22:34-40** or invite a leadership teen to read it.

- Jesus says that there are two great commandments: love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus tells the man that everything centers on these two commandments.
- So, if we want to live according to the "blueprint" for a good life as given to us by God, then we have to love God and love our neighbor.
- This is not a suggestion. These are commandments. In other words, there is no way to avoid them and still lead a happy, full life. **(CCC 1824)**
- We spend a lot of time talking about the importance of loving God and how to live that out. We don't often emphasize loving our neighbor with similar importance. But without it, we are missing something essential. Jesus and the rest of Scripture make it clear that we cannot love God if we don't love our neighbor. **(1 John 4:20-21; CCC 1878)**

Main Point 2:

Loving our neighbor doesn't just mean loving humanity in general or advocating for vague ideals about social justice. It means loving the real individuals present in our lives every day.

Ask: *What does it mean to love your neighbor?* Allow a few teens to share their answers.

- We might think "loving our neighbor" means donating money or supplies in the wake of a catastrophe that happened somewhere in the world, often thousands of miles away.

- We might think it means advocating for laws that help people who are oppressed, hurting, or in need of support.
- We might think it means posting about some social justice cause on social media or joining an advocacy organization.
- These are all good things, and they are valid ways we share the love of God with others.
- However, sometimes it's easier to love humanity in this way while failing to love the individual human beings around us every day.
- In our modern world dominated by social media, it's very easy to get behind a cause we see online and feel good about ourselves for doing it. We post something supportive or share a video exposing some evil in the world, and are tempted to pat ourselves on the back for doing good.
- Here is the problem. Most of the time, that requires very little love. People at war in another country, the vague notion of the poor, refugees on another continent — none of them really make demands of us.
- Sometimes, this "love" is more of a feel-good technique for us. We think we are good people when we raise awareness or oppose injustice in this way, and that may be true, but it's not completely fulfilling the command to love your neighbor. It's not hard to "love" the people whom we determine need help but are far away from us.
- What is harder is loving our literal neighbor — those people in our lives whose quirks and annoying habits we actually know. The people who are close enough to be frustrating and near enough to make real demands on our time, patience, emotions, and energy. These are the neighbors God has put in our lives, and he asks us to love them. **(Going Deeper #1: "Our Random Sampling of Humanity")**
- Loving our neighbor means loving the people we are around every day — parents, siblings, classmates, teammates, strangers in the grocery store, other drivers on the road. Whoever we are around becomes a neighbor to us. **(CCC 2212)**
- And what does it mean to love them? It means we consider their wants, needs, and desires. We treat them the way we would want to be treated. We overcome our selfishness and actually care about another person, to the point where we may need to sacrifice or be uncomfortable for their good. **(CCC 1789, 1931)**
- Love is manifest in our deeds and the way we treat others, not just what we post about on social media or the popular social justice cause we claim to defend.
- This kind of love is challenging. "Humanity" in general is fairly respectable and easy to love. Our sibling who is asking us to watch what they want to watch, that classmate who just won't stop talking to you, the person at the grocery store taking way too long to check out, your parents who are requesting your help with chores when you want to relax — these day-to-day encounters are far more demanding. These are the situations where we are invited to love our neighbor.
- Mother Teresa was a great saint who changed the world by loving those near her. She served the poorest of the poor who were dying on the streets in India. She was so inspirational that many people wanted to join her in this work. It is said she would tell many of those people who wanted to come to India and work with her to "Go find your own Calcutta," and that "If you want to change the world, go home and love your family."

- What did she mean? There are people desperately in need of love all around us. We don't have to go across the world to fulfill Jesus' command to love our neighbor. Our neighbor is already sitting beside us in our classrooms, playing with us on the field, and eating dinner at the same table. That's our opportunity to love.
- God placed you where you are for a reason: in your family, at your school, on your sports team, where you work, or anywhere else you might find yourself. The way to be faithful to this commandment is by loving the people already right next to you. **(Going Deeper #2: "Some Definite Purpose")**

Main Point 3:

When we love the people around us, we learn to appreciate their dignity, are freed from the sadness that springs from selfishness, and experience the mysterious fulfillment that comes from imitating Jesus' self-sacrificial love.

- So, what is the result of loving our neighbor in this way?
- To revisit where we started, God created all humans in his image and likeness. Because of this, every person has inherent dignity that is given to them by God. This is not something we earn, nor is it something that can be taken away. **(CCC 356-357)**
- Loving others is, in part, a response to the dignity each person has by virtue of being made in God's image. Respecting creation is a way of respecting the Creator. By loving our neighbor, we recognize and affirm this dignity in them and help them see it for themselves.
- When you choose to love someone, it often changes the way you perceive them. It trains you to see the good in others, to recognize this dignity, and acknowledge that this person is worthy of love.
- Loving our neighbor not only helps our neighbor, but it also benefits us.
- Saint John Paul II said, "Man cannot fully find himself, except by making a gift of himself." If we want to live our lives to the fullest, the way to do that is to break through our selfishness and love other people generously. **(Going Deeper #3: "Theology of the Body")**
- JPII wasn't just making this up. He was essentially paraphrasing something Jesus himself told us: "For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." **(Matthew 16:25)**
- Love and selflessness are essential qualities that lead to human happiness. It's like they are written into our DNA. We come from God, who is love and who gives himself entirely to us. We are most fulfilled when we do the same.

- Selfishness only ever ultimately ends in sadness. When we are sad, often it is because we are turned in on ourselves. In order to combat this sadness, the best medicine is to go outside of ourselves to love someone else.
- By doing so, we can experience the mysterious joy that comes when we pour ourselves out in service and love other people. This joy comes from imitating Jesus, who denied himself for the sake of others. Uniting ourselves with him in this self-offering actually helps us grow as his disciples and leads to a deep sense of fulfillment. **(CCC 618, 1698, 2013)**
- Every day presents us with so many opportunities to love others. It's not about going and finding people who need help somewhere; it's about paying attention to the people right in front of us and the ways God desires to use us to help them know his love.

BREAK

LEARNING TO LOVE 25 min

Gather the teens in small groups. The following prompts present real-life scenarios in which teens may be challenged to find ways to love their neighbors. The core member should propose the scenarios one at a time for discussion, using the questions below and allowing time for teens to share additional thoughts. The prompts are also included on the "Small Group Questions" handout.

These scenarios may be actively ongoing for some teens. Set an expectation that the small group discussion is not a place for gossip. Any sharing about personal experience with situations like these should not include details such as names or other specific circumstances. Encourage the teens to focus on how the situations felt and how they can love their neighbor in these daily moments.

For each scenario listed below, discuss the following questions as a small group.

1. Have you ever been in a situation like this? How did it feel? What did you experience?
2. What would you do in this situation? Who is your neighbor in this situation? How can you love them?
3. If you have been in this situation before, is there something you would do differently now?

<u>Scenarios</u>

1. You don't make the team (or get a part in the play, the first chair in band, etc.), but one of your friends does.
2. One of your siblings has been annoying you consistently.
3. You find out a friend was talking about you behind your back. When you confront them, they make excuses and don't apologize.
4. You work really hard on a presentation about why you are pro-life for your public speaking class. You are walking with a friend to your next class when they tell you they disagree with your speech.
5. Your friends are making plans for the weekend and want to intentionally exclude someone in your friend group.
6. Some students consistently disrespect one of your teachers.
7. Your parents have had a really busy day, and you can tell they are tired at the end of it, but the dishes are dirty, and the house is a mess.
8. You find out your friends created a group chat that you are not in.
9. You know one of your classmates is getting bullied online.
10. You're driving or riding in the car, and someone cuts you off.

SEND

THE PERFECT NEIGHBOR 15 min

Create a prayerful environment in the meeting space by dimming the lights and playing reflective instrumental music. Explain that teens will hear a summary of different stories from Jesus' life, along with some reflection questions. Project the suggested image as you reflect on each story. Introduce the time of prayer with the following or similar words:

Jesus didn't just tell us to love our neighbor and leave us to figure it out on our own. He was the perfect model of love. When we reflect on his life as seen in the Gospels, we get a glimpse of how merciful, tender, gentle, and loving he was to those in need around him. He invites us to share this same love for others.

We are going to look at a few of these stories and reflect on what they teach us about loving our neighbor.

Blind Bartimaeus

Suggested image: "Healing the Blind Man" by Carl Bloch

Bartimaeus was a blind man who was sitting on the side of the road as Jesus was passing by. He called out loudly, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" People told him to be quiet and not to bother Jesus, but he yelled even louder. In the midst of a large crowd, Jesus heard this man's voice calling out. He stopped, acknowledged him, and healed him. **(Mark 10:46-52)**

Pause for a moment of reflection.

Who is the neighbor I would rather ignore right now? Who do I wish would just stop trying to talk to me or go away? How is God asking me to love them?

Pause for a moment of reflection.

The Paralyzed Man at the Pool of Bethesda

Suggested image: "Christ Healing the Sick at Bethesda" by Carl Bloch

Once when Jesus was in Jerusalem, he passed by a pool that was supposed to have healing powers. Around the pool, there were many people who were paralyzed, blind, lame, or suffering in some other way. Jesus saw one man who had been crippled for 38 years. He had no one who would help him get into the pool at the right time, so he lay there helpless day after day, ignored by most who would pass by. Jesus stopped, spoke with him, and healed him. **(John 5:1-8)**

Pause for a moment of reflection.

Who is the neighbor I am indifferent to right now? Who do I not notice, or do not even care to notice? Who do I pass by without even recognizing they are there? How is God asking me to love them?

Pause for a moment of reflection.

The Woman at the Well

Suggested image: "Woman at the Well" by Carl Bloch

In the Gospel of John, Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman alone at a well. This woman is ostracized from her community for being a great sinner — she has had five different husbands and is currently living with a man who isn't her husband. Jesus, being a man and a Jew, should not even be talking to this woman. He crosses many cultural and social boundaries just to speak to her and let her know that the Messiah has come. **(John 4:7-42)**

Pause for a moment of reflection.

Who is the neighbor who is different from me? Who is ostracized or in the "other" group, whether socially, politically, religiously, or otherwise? How is God asking me to love them?

Pause for a moment of reflection.

The Widow of Nain

Suggested image: “Miracle at Nain” by Mario Minniti

One day, as Jesus drew near to a city called Nain, he encountered a funeral procession. A widow had lost her only son, meaning she was now alone and had no one to provide for her. On seeing the woman, Jesus was moved with compassion. He comforted her, stopped the procession, and raised the man from the dead. **(Luke 7:11-17)**

Pause for a moment of reflection.

Who is the neighbor who is hurting right now and needs someone to comfort them? How is God asking me to love them?

Pause for a moment of reflection.

The Cross

Suggested image: “The Crucifixion” by Andrea Mantegna

As Jesus hung on the cross, beaten, mocked, and dying, he saw the soldiers and others who were responsible for his death. In this moment of great pain and suffering, he forgave them.

Pause for a moment of reflection.

Who is the neighbor who is hurting me right now? Who is my neighbor who needs forgiveness, regardless of whether they earned it? How is God asking me to love them?

Pause for a moment of reflection.

Close with the following prayer.

Jesus,

You are the perfect neighbor.

You show us what it truly means to love others.

Help us be more aware of those around us and recognize the opportunities to love our neighbors each day.

May all those we meet know your love through our words and actions.

Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS 5 min

Make announcements for your program, then dismiss the teens.

AFTER THE LIFE NIGHT

Most core members are tired at the end of the session, but be sure to do two things upon the completion of a Life Night.

FIRST, CLEANUP

Try to foster a spirit of teamwork and generosity among your core team. One of the fastest ways to a divided core team is for one or two members to neglect cleanup. No one is done for the night until everyone is done cleaning up. If a core member is not helping clean up, presume goodwill on their part. If it becomes a consistent problem, address it with them rather than letting issues fester.

Be mindful of any relational ministry that may be happening or teens that need to talk. Sometimes, teens can be deeply moved by a Life Night and may need to continue to process with a trusted adult. During cleanup, your team should continue to be available and interruptible for any teens. You never want to shove teens out the door for the sake of cleaning up.

SECOND, EVALUATE

After all the teens have left, appreciate what God has accomplished through the Life Night. Share any praise reports. Identify who or what needs follow-up. Set a timer and invite the group to share in these five categories of the Life Night: Pros, Cons, Questions, Comments, and Concerns. Remind the core team that evaluations are intended to improve the teens' experiences at Life Teen and are not critical judgments of a youth minister's or core member's performance. As you discuss, encourage the core team to consider each of the Life Night movements of Gather, Proclaim, Break, and Send, or pass out/email the evaluation forms. Conclude your time together in prayer and praise to God.

LIFE NIGHT EVALUATION

On a scale of 1-10, how well did this Life Night accomplish our goal?

GOAL

The goal of this Life Night is to encourage teens to live out the command to love their neighbor by seizing the ordinary opportunities to love the people they are around every day.

Did not accomplish **Nailed it**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

What was the strongest aspect of this Life Night?

Gather **Proclaim** **Break** **Send** **Environment**

Optional: Please explain further.

_____

_____

_____

What kind of follow-up do we need to do after this Life Night?

_____

_____

_____

What can we improve for future Life Nights? How can we accomplish this?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

THE SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

NOVEMBER 22, 2026

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 23:1-6

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

GOSPEL

Matthew 25:31-46

LITURGY NOTE

The Solemnity of Christ the King occurs on the last Sunday of each liturgical year. Instituted in response to growing secularism and the abandonment of God's authority in the 20th century, this celebration is a yearly reminder that while times change and other authorities rise and fall, Jesus Christ reigns as King forever. The readings in this cycle encourage us to acknowledge God's benevolent authority and live as true subjects of so noble a King by imitating his care and concern for others.

KEY WORDS

Shepherd, Judgment, Sin, Death, Resurrection, Inheritance, Compassion, Service, Outreach

KEY THEMES

1. Christ is the good shepherd, the just judge, and the king of kings.
2. God is merciful, but there are repercussions for those who do good and those who do evil.
3. In Adam, sin entered the world; in Christ, forgiveness of sins gives us everlasting life.
4. Death is destroyed. Jesus is victorious.
5. The King cares about his sheep. We are to serve the poor at all times. God judges us for the good we do.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

1. For our priests, that they be faithful imitators of the Good Shepherd and serve their flocks with love and fidelity.
2. For all of us gathered here, that we may be reminded of and give thanks for the many blessings in our lives during this holiday season.
3. For all of us gathered here, that we may attend to the needs of our neighbors with eagerness and perceive the presence of Christ in them.

HOMILY PREPARATION

1. Jesus' words in the Gospel remind us that he is present in the most needy and vulnerable. Who are the needy and vulnerable in the life of an average teenager?
2. What are some practical ways you can carry out the Corporal Works of Mercy?

SONG SUGGESTIONS

Gathering

At the Name of Jesus (Bolduc) [giamusic.com]

Here Is Our King (Crowder) [CCLI #490962]

Hosanna (Ligertwood) [CCLI #4785835]

Jesus Messiah (Tomlin, Carson, Cash, Reeves) [CCLI #5183443]

Mighty to Save (Morgan, Fielding) [CCLI #4591782]

Responsorial Psalm

The Lord is My Shepherd (C. Colson, K. Colson) [craigcolson.com]

The Lord is My Shepherd (Hart) [ocp.org, Spirit & Psalm]

The Lord is My Shepherd (LaRosa) [francescalarosa.com]

The Lord is My Shepherd (C. Muglia) [psalmsbychris.com]

Preparation

God So Loved (Bergthold, E. Cash, F. Cash, M. Cash, S. Cash) [CCLI #7138599]

Great Are You, Lord (Leonard, Ingram, Jordan) [CCLI #6460220]

How Great Thou Art (Hine, Baloche) [CCLI #14181]

Revelation Song (Riddle) [CCLI #4447960]

To the Heights (Blakesley, Catherine, Finch, Hart) [ocpworshipdml.com]

You Are My King, Amazing Love (Foote) [CCLI #2456623]

Communion

Bread, Broken and Given (Thomson, Talarico) [giamusic.com]

Come Let Us Adore (Finch, T. Muglia, Thomson) [ocpworshipdml.com]

I Am The Bread of Life (Angrisano, Booth) [ocp.org, CCLI #7228733]

Jesus, Living Bread (Booth) [ocp.org]

We Belong to You (Thomson) [ocp.org, CCLI #5778951]

Second Communion

How Great Is Our God (Tomlin, Cash, Reeves) [CCLI #4348399]

Jesus, My Everything (Maher, Booth) [ocp.org, CCLI #4510835]

King of Kings (B. Ligertwood, Ingram, S. Ligertwood) [CCLI #7127647]

King of My Heart (J. McMillan, S. McMillan) [CCLI #7046145]

Ocean of Mercy (C. Muglia, Thomson, Wills) [ocpworshipdml.com]

What a Beautiful Name (Fielding, B. Ligertwood) [CCLI #7068424]

Sending Forth

At the Sound (Ndolo, Seay) [ocp.org, CCLI #5657876]

Blessed Be Your Name (M. Redman, B. Redman) [CCLI #3798438]

I Believe (Davenport, Smith, Wickham) [CCLI #7218424]

Jesus Reigns (Angotti) [giamusic.com]

The Lion and the Lamb (Brown, Johnson, Mooring) [CCLI #7038281]

This Is Amazing Grace (Riddle, Farro, Wickham) [CCLI #6333821]

PLANNING SHEET

Liturgical Celebration: _____

Date: _____ **Mass Time:** _____

MINISTERS

Celebrant: _____

Deacon(s): _____

ASSISTING MINISTERS

Greeters/Hospitality: _____

_____

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Lector 1: _____

Lector 2: _____

Gift Bearers: _____

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Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion:

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NOTES

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ORDER OF CELEBRATION

Gathering Song: _____

Penitential Act: _____

Kyrie: _____

Gloria: _____

First Reading: _____

Responsorial Psalm: _____

Second Reading: _____

Gospel Acclamation: _____

Profession of Faith: _____

Prayer of the Faithful: _____

Song of Preparation: _____

Holy, Holy: _____

Memorial Acclamation: _____

Great Amen: _____

Our Father: _____

Lamb of God: _____

Communion Songs: _____

_____

Silence or Song of Praise: _____

Sending Forth: _____

Royal Roundup
The Solemnity of Christ the King

FIRST READING
Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

RESPONSORIAL PSALM
Psalm 23:1-6

SECOND READING
1 Corinthians 15:20-26

GOSPEL
Matthew 25:31-46

KEY WORDS
Shepherd, Judgment, Sin, Death, Resurrection, Inheritance, Poor, Compassion, Service, Outreach

KEY THEMES
1. Christ is the good shepherd, the just judge, and the king of kings.
2. God is merciful, but there are repercussions for those who do good and those who do evil.
3. In Adam, sin entered the world; in Christ, forgiveness of sins gives us everlasting life.
4. Death is destroyed. Jesus is victorious.
5. The King cares about his sheep. We are to serve the poor at all times. God judges us for the good we do.

The Ascent

Welcome and Introduction (5 min)
Welcome all of the teens to the discipleship group and invite them to share one “high point” and one “low point” from their week. If there are new teens, invite them to introduce themselves.

Separate Pieces (10 min)
Begin the session with a game that highlights the teens’ ability to separate two things that are hard to divide. Prior to the session, collect a combination of various objects. Some combinations include:

- Dry macaroni noodles and beans
- Nails and screws
- M&M’s and Skittles
- Two decks of cards with a slight variation in design

Have the teens find a partner and give each pair one of the combinations. The pair that separates the items the fastest wins.

Lectio

Opening Prayer
Lord God, you are the king of our hearts, and someday you will come in glory to separate the sheep from the goats. If you come while we are still on Earth, may we be put on your right side. Teach us, today, what we need to do to ensure a life forever in your heavenly Kingdom. Amen.

Our Voice (10 min)
Use the following questions to prepare the group for the topic of the session:

- Why do we focus on being ready for the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the liturgical year?
- Why is it important to be ready for the Lord's Second Coming?

God's Voice (5 min)
Read Matthew 25:31-46 aloud and then invite a teen to read the passage aloud. Encourage the teens to actively listen. After the second read through, invite the teens to open their Bibles and silently read the passage a third time. Allow time to pause and reflect between read-throughs.

Meditatio

Reflecting on God's Voice (10 min)
Invite the teens to take a few minutes to silently reflect and journal on the following questions:

- If the Lord were to come today, what do you think he would say about the way you are living your life?
- Reflect on each work of mercy listed in the Gospel passage: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and visiting the imprisoned. How do you live out each of these works in your day-to-day life? How can you better live out these works in your life?

Oratio

Discussing God's Voice (30 min)
Following the silent reflection, guide the teens in a time of discussion. The following questions are a great starting point for the discussion, but be open to where the Holy Spirit may guide it:

- What are your initial thoughts after hearing this reading? What stands out to you?
- Jesus said, "What you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me" (Matthew 25:45). What did he mean by this? Does it cause you to pause and consider anything about your own life?

- What are the works of mercy listed in today's Gospel? Why are they so important?
- Is it easy or difficult to live out the works of mercy? Why? Is there one in particular that is easier or more difficult than the others? How can you grow in that area?
- Do you practice the works of mercy Jesus alluded to in the Gospel reading in your own life? Why or why not? How can you better incorporate these works into your own life?
- How can we, as a group, better incorporate these works of mercy?

Contemplatio

The Works of Mercy (10 min)

At the end of the session, give a brief recap of the corporal works of mercy. Then, give the teens time to participate in a work of mercy. Encourage them, as a group, to brainstorm ways they can live out the works of mercy. Consider using this time to plan a service project the group can complete together, like volunteering at a soup kitchen, organizing a clothing drive, or hosting a bake sale to raise money for a charity.

Closing Challenge

Invite the teens to determine which corporal work of mercy is most difficult for them to live out in their daily life and challenge them to incorporate this work into their life in a concrete way this week.

THE FINAL BATTLE

The Passion and Death of Jesus

GOAL

The goal of this session is for middle school youth to recognize the significance and gravity of Jesus' sacrifice and see in it how much God loves them.

Scripture

Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 53, Mark 14:53-64, Luke 22:52-53, John 10:10, John 15:13, Romans 5:6-8, Ephesians 5:2, Philippians 2:5-11, Galatians 2:20

Catechism

CCC 512-560, 585-623

Resources

Handouts
"Scriptural Stations of the Cross" handout

"The Final Battle" Parent Letter

Media
Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, "Why Stations of the Cross?" (youtube.com)

"Stations of the Cross" (lifeteen.com)

GATHER

Youth work in teams to rescue their teammates, bringing them safely across a dangerous path. Thematically, the game corresponds to Jesus as our Savior who shields us from danger and saves us from death.

PROCLAIM

The following are the main teaching points of the Proclaim:

- Jesus' Passion began with his arrest, suffering at the hands of the authorities, and his Crucifixion.
- Jesus took on the punishment for our sins, redeeming and saving us from an eternity separated from God.
- Jesus accepted all of the pain and suffering of death for our sake. Through his Passion and Death, God proves his great love for us and the lengths he would go to bring us back to him.

BREAK

Youth pray through the Scriptural Stations of the Cross as a way to follow in Jesus' footsteps during the Passion.

SEND

Youth reflect on the empty tomb as the final note of the Passion and take a moment in their small group to process the session together.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Reflect on the Stations of the Cross at home. Meditate on the one that stands out to you the most.

THE FINAL BATTLE

The Passion and Death of Jesus

PREP

Collect all materials needed for the Edge Night.

The Break for this session is intended to be done as a walk around your parish grounds. Map the path you plan to walk ahead of time, including the 14 stops, one for each station. If the weather does not permit you to go outside, compile a slideshow of images representing each station to project during the activity in the main meeting space. The activity follows the Scriptural Stations of the Cross. If your parish has icons of these stations inside the church or outdoors, consider praying this prayer there. Alternatively, consider using the "Way of the Cross" pamphlets your parish uses during Lent.

The next Edge Night in this series, "Saved the Day," includes a time of Eucharistic Adoration. Coordinate final details with your parish priest and music minister.

SETUP

Follow the Environment suggestions for the series.

Create a "chasm" down the center of your main meeting space. Use tape to outline the left and right boundaries of a "chasm" 15 feet wide. Mark the start and finish lines perpendicular to the chasm sides about 50 feet apart. If your space allows, consider making the sides of the chasm slightly zig-zag, rather than straight.

Test all audio-visual elements of the Edge Night.

Project the environment image and play the "ES - Unsuspecting Hero" Spotify playlist as the youth enter.

COMING SOON

The next Edge Night in this series, "Saved the Day," includes a time of Eucharistic Adoration. Coordinate final details with your parish priest and music minister.

SUPPLIES

Prepare the following supplies:

Gather
- ☐ Gaff or masking tape
- ☐ Dodgeballs
- ☐ Blindfolds

Proclaim
- ☐ Image of Jesus on the Cross

Break
- ☐ Portable speaker system
- ☐ "Scriptural Stations of the Cross" handout, one per person
- ☐ Processional Cross (optional)

Send
- ☐ Image of the empty tomb

NOTES

CORE ASSIGNMENTS AND NOTES

This youth minister worksheet provides writing space to detail core member assignments and notes specific to running this Edge Night. Write the names of core members assigned to the roles listed.

Highlights:

- Core members not assigned to a role during the Break should be dispersed among the crowd of youth, providing a prayerful example and quiet redirection to distracted youth when necessary.

Announcements: The following session, "Saved the Day," includes Eucharistic Adoration.

Setup: _____

_____

Opening Prayer: _____

Gather – The Harrowing of Sheol

- Leader: _____

Proclaim – The Final Battle: _____

Break – Stations of the Cross

- Leader: _____
- Scripture Reader: _____
- Reflection Reader: _____

Send – The Fifteenth Station

- Leader: _____

Weekly Challenge: _____

Parking Lot: _____

NOTES

THE FINAL BATTLE

The Passion and Death of Jesus

GATHER

Introduction

Welcome the youth and introduce those who are there for the first time. Invite the preselected core member to begin in prayer. Give a brief overview of the Edge Night topic, using the following as an example:

The most epic part of superhero stories is when they finally face their nemesis. The head-to-head battle that ensues is momentous: Will good triumph over evil? In these fights, we often see the hero pushed to their limits, down and out, with no strength left. It appears for a moment that the villain has won. This is how the disciples and followers of Jesus saw his Death — the hero he was supposed to be was overcome by death. However, Jesus' Death was not his defeat, and it ultimately laid the path for our salvation and freedom.

The Harrowing of Sheol (20 min)

Divide the youth into three equal teams. Each team must protect three blindfolded members as they walk through a chasm while the other two teams try to hit the blindfolded members with dodgeballs. If a blindfolded player is hit by a dodgeball, they must return to the start line with at least one teammate.

The team members who are not blindfolded may freely deflect dodgeballs with their hands and arms. If they are hit in the torso or legs, they must stop where they are for three seconds before moving again, counting the seconds out loud. They may also throw the dodgeballs back at the throwing teams.

If a player on a throwing team is hit, they must sit down and stop throwing dodgeballs for five seconds, counting the seconds out loud. Players may retrieve dodgeballs, but they cannot throw them until they are standing on their side of the chasm again.

Place the two throwing teams on either side of the chasm. Line up the dodgeballs along the tape lines. Provide three blindfolds or bandanas to the first team passing through the chasm.

On "go," begin a timer. Stop the timer when the crossing team gets all of its members from the start to the finish. Play three rounds so that each team gets the chance to pass through the chasm. The team with the shortest time wins!

Suggestion

Play thrilling cinematic music during the game.

Step It Up

Place stacks of cardboard boxes or tables on their side to create the walls of the chasm. Use stage platforms to elevate the throwing teams.

Alternate Gather

For smaller groups, consider playing Save the Civilians. Divide into two groups. Select one person from a team to be the first "hero." The rest of that team, the "hostages," stand in a large circle in hula hoops, as spread out as your space allows. The hero stands in the center of the hostages within an eight-foot diameter circle with dodgeballs. The hero's job is to toss dodgeballs to the hostages without them being deflected by the opposing team of "villains" standing between the hero and the hostages. Villains may not throw dodgeballs and should be discouraged from "puppy guarding" the hostages. If a hostage catches a dodgeball, they may leave their hula hoop and join the hero, tossing dodgeballs to their other teammates. Time two-minute rounds, swapping the two teams and the starting hero between each round.

PROCLAIM

"The Final Battle" Teaching (10 min)

Victory?

Share with the youth a one-to-two minute clip of your favorite (appropriate) final battle scene from a movie. This clip should show the heroic actions of one of the main characters. Share with the youth why you like this clip. Write your thoughts here:

_____

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- Most epic movies have a character who sacrifices something for the good of others.
- This storyline is so popular because it speaks to a deep reality that we are made for something great, and we are made by someone great.
- But for us as Christians, this type of heroic epic battle and courageous character is not something that is reserved only for movies or books; it is our reality.
- Our Savior, Jesus, laid down his life to save us. The events of Jesus' Passion detail just how much he went through to bring about our salvation.
- This culmination of what Jesus came to accomplish began with his arrest by the Jewish authorities. In the middle of the night, they came and arrested him in secret and put him on trial late into the night. **(Mark 14:53-64, Luke 22:52-53)**
- Even though there was no evidence to convict Jesus, they brought him to Pilate, the Roman authority in Jerusalem, who was the only one with the power to put Jesus to death.
- Pilate attempted to appease the crowd by having Jesus publicly beaten, but they insisted on his Crucifixion.
- If Jesus' followers believed he was truly the Messiah, this is not how they thought things would go. How could Jesus save them if he were tortured and died a criminal's death?
- Jesus' Passion does save us, just not in the way his followers thought it would.

Going Deeper

Read and discuss the following quote. "Jesus' violent Death was not the result of change in an unfortunate coincidence of circumstances, but is part of the mystery of God's plan." Share with the youth the connection between Jesus and the sacrificial lamb in the Old Testament, and how his blood is now the blood of the New Covenant. God had a plan from the very beginning to bring us back to him. **(CCC 599)**

Saving Grace

- From the beginning of time, after the fall of Adam and Eve, God promised to save us from our sin. **(Genesis 3:15)**
- The entire Old Testament outlines how God formed a people to be his own, but they kept on sinning and breaking their covenants with God. Finally, God sent his own Son to fulfill his promises to his people to set them free from sin. **(CCC 602)**
- We could not redeem ourselves, as history had shown time and again. But only by the power and grace of God could our salvation be accomplished. By his Passion and Death, Jesus took on all the consequences of sin and all the consequences of the broken covenants and overcame them all.
- Jesus' Death "restores [us] to communion with God by reconciling [us] to God through the 'blood of the covenant, which was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" **(CCC 613)**
- God shows us that his plan was a plan of love – a love that would go to any end, even death, to save us.
- This ultimate sacrifice would be more understandable if, like in our hero's story, we were innocent bystanders captured by the evil villain. However, in the case of sin, we turn our backs on God, rejecting his goodness and willingly submit ourselves to lesser things. Even then, God does not reject us.

Project and read **Romans 5:6-8**.

- God did not wait for us to "get it right" to save us. He suffered greatly so that we might be saved even while we were still separated from him. Through Jesus' sacrifice, he brought us back to him.
- We do not have to do anything to earn God's love or to earn this gift of salvation; it is freely given to all of us.

He Saved You

- Jesus suffered and died for all of humanity, but that also means that he did this all specifically for you. Jesus freely gave his life for you because he loves you. Jesus freely gave his life for you so you could experience new life now and for eternity. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." **(John 15:13)**
- Jesus knows your struggles, sufferings, and sins, and he loves you and died for you to set you free. He wants you to know him, to love him, and to follow him, for in him is the fullness of life. **(John 10:10)**
- Jesus "knew and loved us all when he offered his life." **(CCC 616, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 5:2)**
- He knew you, and he loved you, when he died on the cross. In his death, he shows you the lengths he is willing to go to for you.

End the Proclaim by projecting an image of Jesus on the Cross.

BREAK

Stations of the Cross (35 min)

Bring the youth outside to the first stop on your preplanned path. Introduce the Stations of the Cross, using the following as an example:

The Stations of the Cross is a prayer that commemorates the Passion of Jesus and the painful path he walked to the Cross. Praying the Stations of the Cross helps us remember the weight of Jesus' sacrifice, allowing us to reflect on the actions leading up to his Death and challenging us to see the Passion as an act of love.

Pass out a copy of the "Scriptural Stations of the Cross" to each youth. Invite them to read along and respond at the appropriate times.

Suggestion

Consider putting on a "Living Stations" by assigning one or two stations to each small group. With their small group members, they create a tableau image of the station for others to look at while the meditation is read aloud.

Step It Up

Place a bowl of two-inch stones at each stop along your path. After each station is prayed, have the youth pick up one rock to place in a bag that they carry, signifying the weight Jesus carried on the road to Calvary.

SEND

The Fifteenth Station (10 min)

Gather back in the main meeting space, and invite the youth to sit down. Invite them to take a quiet moment to reflect on what they just experienced in the Stations of the Cross.

After a few moments, walk them through the next reflection, using the following as an example:

The week that began with Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem ended with his being laid in the tomb. However, that is not the end of the story. Jesus did not remain in the grave.

Project an image of the empty tomb.

We will expand more on this in the next session, but we can still look ahead and remember that Jesus is victorious over death. Just as it was not the last word for him, it is not the last word for us either. The final word of this great battle is one of love that conquers the grave — Jesus' infinite love for you.

Invite the youth to gather in their small groups to process the session. Consider using the following questions to prompt discussion:

- What stood out to you the most from the Stations of the Cross?
- What feelings did you experience as we prayed through them?
- What do you want to remember the most from this experience?

Step It Up

While the youth are outside the main meeting space for the Break, set up an "empty tomb" with large fake rocks, greenery, and loose white fabric to represent the burial garments.

Weekly Challenge

Invite the preselected core members to present the Weekly Challenge and Closing Prayer.

Reflect on the Stations of the Cross at home. Meditate on the one that stands out to you the most.

Dismiss the core members preassigned to parking lot safety.

Make announcements related to your program.

NOTES

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SCRIPTURAL STATIONS OF THE CROSS

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: God of power and mercy, in love, you sent your Son that we might be cleansed of sin and live with you forever. Bless us as we gather to reflect on his suffering and death that we may learn from his example the way we should go. We ask this through the same Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

FIRST STATION: JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: (genuflect) Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. (stand)

Scripture

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go yonder and pray." And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Matthew 26:36-41

Reflection

Jesus is afraid of what will happen. Even in his sorrow, he desires the will of his Father. Lord, grant us your strength and wisdom that we may seek to follow your will in all things.

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

SECOND STATION: JESUS, BETRAYED BY JUDAS, IS ARRESTED

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: (genuflect) Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. (stand)

Scripture

And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I shall kiss is the man; seize him and lead him away safely." And when he came, he went up to him at once, and said, "Master!" And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him.

Mark 14:43-46

Reflection

One of Jesus' closest friends hands him over to the authorities. Judas, who has seen and believed that Jesus is the Messiah, turns away from him. Lord, grant us the courage to live lives that faithfully reflect the Good News you bring.

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

THIRD STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED BY THE SANHEDRIN

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: (genuflect) Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. (stand)

Scripture

They said, "If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." And they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am." And they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips."

Luke 22:67-71

Reflection

For the authorities, the one who claims to be the Son of God is an enemy, a heretic, and a danger. Punishment must be exacted — the law demands it. Lord, grant us your sense of true justice that we may always work to bring about the Kingdom that you promised.

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

FOURTH STATION: JESUS IS DENIED BY PETER

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: (genuflect) Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. (stand)

Scripture

After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you." Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the cock crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Matthew 26:73-75

Reflection

Fear again scares away one of Jesus' closest friends. Peter is not unrepentant; he shows sorrow for his cowardice. Lord, grant us the gift of honesty that we may not fear to speak the truth even when difficult.

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

FIFTH STATION: JESUS IS JUDGED BY PILATE

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: (genuflect) Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. (stand)

Scripture

And as soon as it was morning the chief priests, with the elders and scribes, and the whole council held a consultation; and they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him to Pilate. And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." And the chief priests accused him of many things. And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate wondered. So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas; and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

Mark 15:1-5, 15

Reflection

Pilate takes the easy way out, trusting the false evidence of the crowd instead of his own beliefs. Lord, grant us good discernment that we may see as you see, not as the world sees.

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

SIXTH STATION: JESUS IS SCOURGED AND CROWNED WITH THORNS

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: (genuflect) Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. (stand)

Scripture

Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him. And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and arrayed him in a purple robe; they came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands.

John 19:1-3

Reflection

Jesus is crowned as king as a mocking jeer. The head meant for a crown of glory is met with a crown of thorns. Lord, grant us patience in times of suffering that we may offer our lives as a sacrifice of praise.

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

SEVENTH STATION: JESUS BEARS THE CROSS

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: (genuflect) Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. (stand)

Scripture

When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no crime in him." They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own Cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha.

John 19:6, 15-17

Reflection

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, he was praised as a king. Now he leaves as a condemned prisoner, carrying his heavy death sentence on his shoulders. Lord, grant us strength that we may faithfully bear our crosses each day.

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

EIGHTH STATION: JESUS IS HELPED BY SIMON OF CYRENE TO CARRY THE CROSS

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: (genuflect) Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. (stand)

Scripture

And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak, and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him. And they compelled a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his Cross.

Mark 15:20-21

Reflection

What a profound gift of love — to aid Jesus in carrying his Cross, the Cross he bears for us. Lord, grant us willing spirits that we may be your instruments on Earth.

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

NINTH STATION: JESUS MEETS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: (genuflect) Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. (stand)

Scripture

And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.”

“For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

Luke 23:27-28, 31

Reflection

We join the women in mourning. This is a terrible sight to witness, but Jesus turns their mourning to a different cause. Lord, grant us gentle spirits that we may comfort those who mourn.

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

TENTH STATION: JESUS IS CRUCIFIED

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: (genuflect) Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. (stand)

Scripture

And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.

Luke 23:33-34

Reflection

From the Cross, Jesus offers words of forgiveness to his executors. Jesus died for them and their sins too. Lord, grant us merciful hearts that we may bring your forgiveness to all.

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

ELEVENTH STATION: JESUS PROMISES HIS KINGDOM TO THE GOOD THIEF

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: (genuflect) Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. (stand)

Scripture

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Luke 23:39-43

Reflection

Though we are deserving of punishment, we trust in your great mercy, Jesus. Forgive us our sins. Lord, grant us perseverance, that we may never stop seeking you.

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

TWELFTH STATION: JESUS SPEAKS TO HIS MOTHER AND THE DISCIPLE

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: (genuflect) Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. (stand)

Scripture

Standing by the Cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

John 19:25-27

Reflection

Mother Mary, lead us closer to Jesus, always. Lord, grant us perseverance that we may be willing to stand by those in need.

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

THIRTEENTH STATION: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: (genuflect) Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. (stand)

Scripture

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.

Luke 23:44-46

(pause and kneel for a short time)

Reflection

Jesus, in my sin I despair, but in you is my hope. Lord, grant us trust in you that when our time on Earth is ended, our spirits may come to you without delay.

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

FOURTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS PLACED IN THE TOMB

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: (genuflect) Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. (stand)

Scripture

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed.

Matthew 27:57-60

Reflection

Jesus, your death has ransomed us. We patiently wait by the tomb for your glory to be revealed. Lord, grant us your compassion that we may always provide for those in need.

All: Lord Jesus, help us walk in your steps.

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: Jesus, our Lord and Savior, may our meditations upon your great love for us continue to draw us closer to you and make us more compassionate and caring toward others. May we learn from your sacrificial example and never hesitate to help our brothers and sisters in need. Thank you, Jesus.

All: Amen.

Adapted from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (usccb.org).

THE SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

NOVEMBER 22, 2026

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 23:1-6

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

GOSPEL

Matthew 25:31-46

LITURGY NOTE

The Solemnity of Christ the King occurs on the last Sunday of each liturgical year. Instituted in response to growing secularism and the abandonment of God's authority in the 20th century, this celebration is a yearly reminder that while times change and other authorities rise and fall, Jesus Christ reigns as King forever. The readings in this cycle encourage us to acknowledge God's benevolent authority and live as true subjects of so noble a King by imitating his care and concern for others.

KEY WORDS

Shepherd, Judgment, Sin, Death, Resurrection, Inheritance, Compassion, Service, Outreach

KEY THEMES

1. Christ is the good shepherd, the just judge, and the king of kings.
2. God is merciful, but there are repercussions for those who do good and those who do evil.
3. In Adam, sin entered the world; in Christ, forgiveness of sins gives us everlasting life.
4. Death is destroyed. Jesus is victorious.
5. The King cares about his sheep. We are to serve the poor at all times. God judges us for the good we do.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

1. For our priests, that they be faithful imitators of the Good Shepherd and serve their flocks with love and fidelity.
2. For all of us gathered here, that we may be reminded of and give thanks for the many blessings in our lives during this holiday season.
3. For all of us gathered here, that we may attend to the needs of our neighbors with eagerness and perceive the presence of Christ in them.

HOMILY PREPARATION

1. Jesus' words in the Gospel remind us that he is present in the most needy and vulnerable. Who are the needy and vulnerable in the life of an average teenager?
2. What are some practical ways you can carry out the Corporal Works of Mercy?

SONG SUGGESTIONS

Gathering

At the Name of Jesus (Bolduc) [giamusic.com]

Here Is Our King (Crowder) [CCLI #490962]

Hosanna (Ligertwood) [CCLI #4785835]

Jesus Messiah (Tomlin, Carson, Cash, Reeves) [CCLI #5183443]

Mighty to Save (Morgan, Fielding) [CCLI #4591782]

Responsorial Psalm

The Lord is My Shepherd (C. Colson, K. Colson) [craigcolson.com]

The Lord is My Shepherd (Hart) [ocp.org, Spirit & Psalm]

The Lord is My Shepherd (LaRosa) [francescalarosa.com]

The Lord is My Shepherd (C. Muglia) [psalmsbychris.com]

Preparation

God So Loved (Bergthold, E. Cash, F. Cash, M. Cash, S. Cash) [CCLI #7138599]

Great Are You, Lord (Leonard, Ingram, Jordan) [CCLI #6460220]

How Great Thou Art (Hine, Baloche) [CCLI #14181]

Revelation Song (Riddle) [CCLI #4447960]

To the Heights (Blakesley, Catherine, Finch, Hart) [ocpworshipdml.com]

You Are My King, Amazing Love (Foote) [CCLI #2456623]

Communion

Bread, Broken and Given (Thomson, Talarico) [giamusic.com]

Come Let Us Adore (Finch, T. Muglia, Thomson) [ocpworshipdml.com]

I Am The Bread of Life (Angrisano, Booth) [ocp.org, CCLI #7228733]

Jesus, Living Bread (Booth) [ocp.org]

We Belong to You (Thomson) [ocp.org, CCLI #5778951]

Second Communion

How Great Is Our God (Tomlin, Cash, Reeves) [CCLI #4348399]

Jesus, My Everything (Maher, Booth) [ocp.org, CCLI #4510835]

King of Kings (B. Ligertwood, Ingram, S. Ligertwood) [CCLI #7127647]

King of My Heart (J. McMillan, S. McMillan) [CCLI #7046145]

Ocean of Mercy (C. Muglia, Thomson, Wills) [ocpworshipdml.com]

What a Beautiful Name (Fielding, B. Ligertwood) [CCLI #7068424]

Sending Forth

At the Sound (Ndolo, Seay) [ocp.org, CCLI #5657876]

Blessed Be Your Name (M. Redman, B. Redman) [CCLI #3798438]

I Believe (Davenport, Smith, Wickham) [CCLI #7218424]

Jesus Reigns (Angotti) [giamusic.com]

The Lion and the Lamb (Brown, Johnson, Mooring) [CCLI #7038281]

This Is Amazing Grace (Riddle, Farro, Wickham) [CCLI #6333821]

PLANNING SHEET

Liturgical Celebration: _____

Date: _____ **Mass Time:** _____

MINISTERS

Celebrant: _____

Deacon(s): _____

ASSISTING MINISTERS

Greeters/Hospitality: _____

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Lector 1: _____

Lector 2: _____

Gift Bearers: _____

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Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion:

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NOTES

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ORDER OF CELEBRATION

Gathering Song: _____

Penitential Act: _____

Kyrie: _____

Gloria: _____

First Reading: _____

Responsorial Psalm: _____

Second Reading: _____

Gospel Acclamation: _____

Profession of Faith: _____

Prayer of the Faithful: _____

Song of Preparation: _____

Holy, Holy: _____

Memorial Acclamation: _____

Great Amen: _____

Our Father: _____

Lamb of God: _____

Communion Songs: _____

_____

Silence or Song of Praise: _____

Sending Forth: _____

Royal Roundup
The Solemnity of Christ the King

FIRST READING
Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

RESPONSORIAL PSALM
Psalm 23:1-6

SECOND READING
1 Corinthians 15:20-26

GOSPEL
Matthew 25:31-46

KEY WORDS
Shepherd, Judgment, Sin, Death, Resurrection, Inheritance, Poor, Compassion, Service, Outreach

KEY THEMES
1. Christ is the good shepherd, the just judge, and the king of kings.
2. God is merciful, but there are repercussions for those who do good and those who do evil.
3. In Adam, sin entered the world; in Christ, forgiveness of sins gives us everlasting life.
4. Death is destroyed. Jesus is victorious.
5. The King cares about his sheep. We are to serve the poor at all times. God judges us for the good we do.

The Ascent

Welcome and Introduction (5 min)
Welcome all of the teens to the discipleship group and invite them to share one “high point” and one “low point” from their week. If there are new teens, invite them to introduce themselves.

Separate Pieces (10 min)
Begin the session with a game that highlights the teens’ ability to separate two things that are hard to divide. Prior to the session, collect a combination of various objects. Some combinations include:

- Dry macaroni noodles and beans
- Nails and screws
- M&M’s and Skittles
- Two decks of cards with a slight variation in design

Have the teens find a partner and give each pair one of the combinations. The pair that separates the items the fastest wins.

Lectio

Opening Prayer
Lord God, you are the king of our hearts, and someday you will come in glory to separate the sheep from the goats. If you come while we are still on Earth, may we be put on your right side. Teach us, today, what we need to do to ensure a life forever in your heavenly Kingdom. Amen.

Our Voice (10 min)
Use the following questions to prepare the group for the topic of the session:

- Why do we focus on being ready for the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the liturgical year?
- Why is it important to be ready for the Lord's Second Coming?

God's Voice (5 min)
Read Matthew 25:31-46 aloud and then invite a teen to read the passage aloud. Encourage the teens to actively listen. After the second read through, invite the teens to open their Bibles and silently read the passage a third time. Allow time to pause and reflect between read-throughs.

Meditatio

Reflecting on God's Voice (10 min)
Invite the teens to take a few minutes to silently reflect and journal on the following questions:

- If the Lord were to come today, what do you think he would say about the way you are living your life?
- Reflect on each work of mercy listed in the Gospel passage: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and visiting the imprisoned. How do you live out each of these works in your day-to-day life? How can you better live out these works in your life?

Oratio

Discussing God's Voice (30 min)
Following the silent reflection, guide the teens in a time of discussion. The following questions are a great starting point for the discussion, but be open to where the Holy Spirit may guide it:

- What are your initial thoughts after hearing this reading? What stands out to you?
- Jesus said, "What you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me" (Matthew 25:45). What did he mean by this? Does it cause you to pause and consider anything about your own life?

- What are the works of mercy listed in today's Gospel? Why are they so important?
- Is it easy or difficult to live out the works of mercy? Why? Is there one in particular that is easier or more difficult than the others? How can you grow in that area?
- Do you practice the works of mercy Jesus alluded to in the Gospel reading in your own life? Why or why not? How can you better incorporate these works into your own life?
- How can we, as a group, better incorporate these works of mercy?

Contemplatio

The Works of Mercy (10 min)

At the end of the session, give a brief recap of the corporal works of mercy. Then, give the teens time to participate in a work of mercy. Encourage them, as a group, to brainstorm ways they can live out the works of mercy. Consider using this time to plan a service project the group can complete together, like volunteering at a soup kitchen, organizing a clothing drive, or hosting a bake sale to raise money for a charity.

Closing Challenge

Invite the teens to determine which corporal work of mercy is most difficult for them to live out in their daily life and challenge them to incorporate this work into their life in a concrete way this week.