

DAY ONE

1. What thoughts from the lesson, commentary or reflection had special meaning for you this week?



Read Revelation 2:1-4

2. John has begun his mission of writing a letter to the seven churches in Asia. Record the recipient of the first letter, location of the church and the command from the first part of verse 1.

NOTE: Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia and the commercial, cultural, and religious center of Asia. The other six churches were chosen based on their geographical location (see map) rather than the size of their Christian communities. *NABRE*

3a. Complete below John's description of Jesus (remainder of verse 1).

The one who holds the

and walks in the midst of the

b. What do these actions or images say to you about Jesus' relationship to the church community in Ephesus?

4a. Jesus continued to speak to John in verse 2. Complete the phrases below that describe what he "knows" about the church in Ephesus.

I know your

and that you cannot

you have tested those

and discovered that

b. In verse 3 John said the people tirelessly endured and suffered in Christ's name. Can you give an example of this same thing in our church today?

5a. After offering praises to the church of Ephesus for their strengths, Jesus' message changed direction. Record the words from verse 4 that indicate this.

b. Have you experienced a similar loss of enthusiasm for the church? How would you rekindle your original feeling?

6. CONNECTION: Today we read the words of Jesus' message to the Ephesians. The words were delivered with praise for their good works and followed by the revelation that there was something wrong. This formula of communicating something difficult to a loved one, co-worker, friend or student is an excellent model to follow. Offering a positive message helps build self esteem and worth, setting the stage for the more challenging words. Can you share an example of a time you needed to speak a hard truth to someone? Were you able to gently deliver the message with kindness and praise? Were you able to recognize how it affected the outcome?

Read and record Hebrews 10:24-25 and pray today for kindness and encouragement toward all who share our faith and love of God.

DAY TWO

Read Revelation 2:5-7

7a. Today's readings continue the message to the fallen Ephesians to repent and return to their good works. What will be the consequence if they do not heed the command (verse 5)?

b. What do you think was meant by this outcome?

8a. For what reasons were the Ephesians praised in verse 6?

NOTE: The Nicolaitans were thought to be a heretical sect who took a lax approach to morality. *Navarre Bible*

b. Comment on how the word hate was used in this verse by looking up one of the following passages.

Psalm 97:10

Proverbs 8:13

1 John 4:20

9a. Record the message from the Spirit to the churches that those with ears ought to hear (second sentence of verse 7).

b. What do you think the words "to the victor" in this message might refer to?

10. What does the phrase "eat of the tree of life in the garden of God" mean to you?

11. CONNECTION: Today's readings concluded the first of the seven letters to the churches in Asia. The church of Ephesus received a message from Jesus with words of praise, a complaint, a warning, a message from the Spirit and a promise or reward. This same type of message was delivered to six additional churches in Asia and is also a message for us today. In your church, what are some good works that merit praise or criticism that might bring about change? What do you think the Spirit would want your ears to hear? How might your spiritual community react to such an evaluation? Share some thoughts with your group.

In your prayer time today, reflect on the spiritual state of your faith community and pray that your ears be open to hear words of encouragement as you strive to recognize what needs improvement.

DAY THREE

Read Revelation 2:8-11

12. We begin today with a letter sent to the angel of the church in Smyrna. How did Jesus describe himself according to verse 8?

NOTE: Smyrna, known as Izmir in Turkey today, was approximately thirty miles north of Ephesus. It was fiercely loyal to Rome and home to a large Jewish community openly hostile toward Christians. *NABRE*

13. Complete the following phrases from verse 9 that state what Jesus said he knows.

I know your

I know the slander of those

but rather are

NOTE: The assembly of Satan referred to a group of Jewish people who persecuted Christians in Smyrna for their belief in Jesus Christ. In Hebrew, the name Satan means accuser, and thus was applied to this group's practices. *Ignatius Commentary*

14. What do you think it means to endure misfortune and poverty and yet feel fortunate? Can you give an example?

15a. The people of Smyrna were told to not fear anything. Record the sufferings they would face from the second sentence of verse 10.

NOTE: The period of ten days was not an exact length of incarceration. Since numbers in Revelation are meant to be symbolic, it indicates a short period of time, comparable to the testing of Daniel and his friends. *Williamson*

b. How were the people advised to deal with these ordeals in the remainder of verse 10?

16a. To whom were the people to listen and what was the message they were to hear according to verse 11?

b. What does the “second death” mean to you?

17. **CONNECTION:** The letter sent to the people in Smyrna was written with tender words and contained no warnings. It was a communication intended to sustain them during a time of persecution and encourage their faith. Letters of encouragement are a blessing. Recall a time when you wrote words of encouragement to someone who was suffering. Perhaps you were on the receiving end of a note, card or email that lifted your spirit in a time of pain or anguish. Share with your group some details and the effect the message had.

Read and record 1 Thessalonians 5:11 and reflect on how you can provide encouragement to anyone who needs it.

DAY FOUR

Read Revelation 2:12-14

18a. The third letter from John was addressed to the angel of the church in Pergamum. Record the words to be written (verse 12).

NOTE: Pergamum, known as Bergama in modern-day Turkey, was about forty-five miles northeast of Smyrna. It was known as “Satan’s throne” for its pagan practices and worship, including the great temple of Zeus, and for its outstanding library. The word *parchment* was derived from its name. **NABRE**

b. Jesus was referred to as the one with a two-edged sword (Revelation 1:16). What does this image suggest to you regarding the people in Pergamum?

19. Describe Jesus’ praise for the people in Pergamum, despite knowing they lived in the place of Satan’s throne (verse 13)?

you hold fast to

have not denied

not even in the days of Antipas,

20. List the things that Jesus held against the people according to verse 14.

You have some people there who

who instructed Balak to

to eat food sacrificed to idols

21a. Read Numbers 31:16 and comment on how following Balaam would endanger the faithfulness of the people.

b. Give one example of how we sacrifice to idols today.

22. Stumbling block is a phrase used frequently in scripture. Record one of the following references that helps you understand its use in our passage.

Psalm 119:165

Romans 14:13

1 Peter 2:8

23. CONNECTION: The message to the people of Pergamum began with praise but then became a warning about “stumbling blocks” that were put before them, worshiping and sacrificing to false idols and sexual promiscuity. Our spiritual lives are full of occasions, people and things that may trip us and cause us to fall. Think of the stumbling blocks that abound in our culture today. Can you name a few of these in your life or in your faith community and share some thoughts on how to conquer them?

Spend some time today reflecting on the stumbling blocks thrown your way and pray for the wisdom of God to guide you as you walk the rocky paths on your spiritual journey.

DAY FIVE

Read Revelation 2:15-17

24. We read today that some people in Pergamum continued to hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans (verse 15). How did this differ from the practices of the people in Ephesus? (See Revelation 2:6)

25a. Jesus directed the people to repent. Record the consequences if they refused to obey according to verse 16.

b. What do you think was meant by this type of warfare?

26. To repent means more than the simple act of feeling sorry. True repentance must embrace change. Look up one of the following scripture verses and write a phrase that conveys this idea.

Proverbs 28:13

Mark 1:15

2 Timothy 2:25

27. From verse 17, complete the message from the Spirit to the victor:

I shall give

I shall also give

upon which is inscribed a new name

28. Choose one of these images below and explain what you think it represents.

hidden manna

white amulet

new name

29. CONNECTION: The remedy for sin is repentance through our faith in Christ, a turning toward the light of God. One must promise to make amends and live a life of holiness and justice in compliance with God's law. God guides, sustains and restores us, always showing mercy to the contrite of heart. Repentance is possible only by the grace of God. St. John Paul II reminds us that repentance is the first step in returning to God. Reflect on a time in your life when you or someone close to you experienced the mercy of forgiveness. Share if you can some details and the changes it brought about.

Begin your prayer today asking God to reveal to you anything in your life that calls for change, knowing a great reward waits if you truly heed His words.

DAY SIX

Read Revelation 2:18-20

30. We begin today with John writing a message to the angel of the church in Thyatira. How was the Son of God described in verse 18?

NOTE: Thyatira, known in Turkey today as Akhisar, was forty miles southeast of Pergamum, a frontier town famous for its workers' guilds and festal meals in pagan temples. *NABRE*

31. What did Jesus say concerning the people in Thyatira according to verse 19?

32. Jesus revealed that he knew their last works exceeded their first. As our faith matures, God's grace enables us to grow in faith through our words and actions. Give an example of an area in your life where you have experienced this growth.

33. Despite this praise, Jesus revealed his dissatisfaction with the people for their tolerance of the false prophetess, Jezebel. What did he say about this woman (verse 20)?

NOTE: Jezebel was the wife of Ahab, King of Israel and an adversary of the prophet Elijah. She ruthlessly slaughtered the innocent and was infamous for sorcery and harlotry. Jezebel in this passage refers metaphorically to a false prophet leading the faithful into the practices of idolatry and sexual immorality. *Ignatius Commentary*

34. What does a 'Jezebel' symbolize in our culture today?

35. CONNECTION: The people in Thyatira were praised for their love, endurance, service, and growth in their faith. They were also warned against tolerance for a false prophetess, Jezebel, who could lead them astray. Their tolerance meant they could choose to look the other way and not be led into wrongdoing. Tolerance is the ability or willingness to put up with something, in particular opinions or behavior with which we do not agree. We sometimes accept and "tolerate" the actions of others even when some are offensive or immoral. Can you think of a situation when tolerance can be a good thing? When is it not? Share some thoughts with your group.

Read Romans 16:19 and write a prayer today asking God to fill you with a spirit of wisdom and understanding as you discern the actions of those around you.

Read pages 20-27 in the *New Collegeville Commentary, The Book of Revelation* by Catherine A. Cory. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) © 2010, 1991, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

