

**Review:** *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

**DAY ONE**

**Read Matthew 17:1-13**

1. As we begin chapter 17, six days have passed. Jesus led Peter, James and his brother, John, up a high mountain. Describe below what happened there from verses 2-5.

What happened to Jesus?

Who else appeared?

How did Peter respond?

What did the voice from a cloud say?

**NOTE:** Peter, James and John form an inner circle among the twelve (see Matthew 26:37). They were among the first disciples whom Jesus called (see Matthew 4:18-22). *Sacra Pagina*

**NOTE:** Peter desires to prolong the heavenly experience by suggesting that he make three booths. The booths are small, tentlike shelters erected yearly at the Jewish Feast of Booths (Lev 23:39-43). This liturgical feast became an early Church symbol of the ongoing joys of heaven (cf. Rev 7:9-10). *Ignatius Study Bible*

2. In Scripture, revelations about God frequently occurred on mountains. Look up and record one of the following verses.

Exodus 19:20

Psalms 3:4

Isaiah 2:2

3. How was witnessing the transfiguration important for the disciples' training? (see Commentary, page 90)

4. When the disciples became afraid, Jesus comforted them and cautioned them not to tell anyone what they saw "until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead" (verses 6-9). Just like the apostles, we may forget, in our friendship with Jesus, about his power and holiness. How does thinking about Jesus in this vision affect your relationship with him?

**NOTE: Refer to the Commentary, page 91, to understand how the passage about The Coming of Elijah in verses 9-13 reflects the debate about the correct interpretation of Malachi 3:23 (NABRE) or Malachi 4:5 (NRSVCE).**

5. **CONNECTION:** Jesus took his disciples up the mountain where they witnessed a vision of his glory. In our lives, we too can have a "mountain top" experience that transforms us, if only for a moment, as we realize we are God's beloved. In going up the mountain, we get away from ordinary life to gain a new perspective of Christ's presence in our lives, but, like the disciples, we can't stay on the mountain. Have you had an experience in which you encountered God in an intense, intimate way? If so, how did you return to normal life while holding onto what you learned on the mountain?

Read and record 2 Corinthians 3:18. Pray today for the grace to see the presence of God in every moment.

## **DAY TWO**

**Read Matthew 17:14-27**

6. When Jesus and the three apostles came down from the mountain, a crowd was waiting for them. A man knelt before him and asked the Lord to have pity on his son whom the disciples could not cure (verses 14-16). What questions did Jesus ask in verse 17 and to whom do you think he was referring?

7. Later, after Jesus had cured the boy, the disciples asked why they had not been able to heal him. Record Jesus' words in verse 20. (Good memory verse)

8. Jesus reproached the disciples for their "little faith" (verse 20). Reflect on all the experiences they have had walking with Jesus that should have inspired a greater faith. Comment briefly on an experience in your life or something wonderful that you have been given that should have inspired your deeper faith.

9. In verses 22-23, Jesus predicted his passion for a second time (see Matthew 16:21-23). The first time the disciples reacted with disbelief; this time they were "overwhelmed with grief." How would you react if you were warned in advance of a time of great loss in your life?

**NOTE:** See the Commentary, page 92, for an explanation of the Payment of the Temple Tax (verses 24-27). Jesus makes it clear that as children of God, whose house is the temple, they are exempt from taxes. Nonetheless, for the sake of not causing a scandal, Jesus pays the money.

10. CONNECTION: In our lives we are frequently confronted by situations or problems that seem impossible to us. Just like the disciples, something causes our faith to fail as we try to understand or find a solution or reason for hope. Yet, Jesus reassures us that nothing is impossible if we have faith even as small as a mustard seed. Have you ever seen the kind of faith that can move mountains? Describe your experience of when something impossible was made possible through an abiding, persistent faith.

Read and record Mark 11:23. Write a prayer today asking, with complete certainty, for God to intervene with an answer for someone who needs a miracle.

### **DAY THREE**

**Read Matthew 18:1-9**

**NOTE:** Chapter 18 is Jesus' fourth discourse, a sermon on the life of the Community of the faithful, also known as the "Ecclesial (Church) Discourse." Each of its two sections ends with a parable teaching. *Agape*

11. As we begin today, the disciples asked Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" To answer them, Jesus placed a child among them (verses 1-2). What did he tell the disciples in verse 3? (Good memory verse)

**NOTE:** Clearly the disciples still suffer from human ambition: they want to occupy key positions when Jesus comes to establish his Kingdom on earth. *Navarre Bible*

12. Jesus continued in verse 4 saying that the greatest in the kingdom was "whoever humbles himself like this child." What is Jesus' message in this passage for our leaders today?

13. Receiving a child in Jesus' name is the same as receiving Jesus himself (verse 5). Who are children symbolic of in this passage?

14. Jesus then warned about those who tempt or cause the "little ones" to sin and used strong images to describe what will happen to them. Pick one image from verses 6-9 below and explain what it means in your own words.

It is better to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.

If your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.

**NOTE: A millstone was a stone so large that donkeys were required to turn it when milling grain. This punishment by drowning was often reserved for the worst criminals. *Ignatius Study Bible***

15. **CONNECTION:** Jesus tells us that children, those who are humble and weakest among us, will be rewarded in his kingdom, not those who are successful in the eyes of the world. Jesus recognizes that pride and arrogance, more than anything else, will lead us to sin. Reflect on the qualities of children and describe someone you know or have known with the heart of a child. How does that inspire you to change your life or attitudes as a disciple of Christ?

Read and record 1 John 3:1 and reflect today on what it means to be a child of God.

#### **DAY FOUR**

**Read Matthew 18:10-20**

16. Jesus continued to teach the disciples about the value of "the little ones" saying that "their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father" (verse 10). Look up one of the following verses and record what you learn about angels (see also CCC 329, 336).

Tobit 12:14-15

Acts 12:6-7

Hebrews 13:2

**NOTE: Scripture portrays God's angels as protectors, guides, and helpers of his people. This verse is traditionally cited as biblical evidence for guardian angels. Several Church Fathers teach that God assigns everyone an angel to watch over him throughout life. *Ignatius Study Bible***

17. Jesus illustrated this teaching with a parable about a shepherd who searched for a lost sheep in verses 12-14. This parable illustrates that every believer is precious to God and the whole community, and we should care about those drawn away from God and his Church. What is one thing you can do to help bring back our lost sheep?

18. In verses 15-17, Jesus emphasized that the discipline of members was the responsibility of the community using three methods of reconciliation: correct another person face to face, or with two or three witnesses, or finally, the church should intervene. When have you seen one of these actions lead to healing and growth?

**NOTE: *Treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector (verse 17):* This verse presupposes a largely Jewish-Christian milieu in which such people are looked down upon and sounds like a decree of excommunication. Nevertheless, earlier in the Gospel, such persons have shown great faith in Jesus. *Sacra Pagina***

19. Select one of the following phrases from verses 19-20 about communal prayer and comment on how you see this at work in the life of your family or community (Good memory verses).

if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father.

where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them

**NOTE: Verse 18, "*whatever you bind on earth...loose.*" In Matthew 16:19 Peter was invested with Christ's authority as the visible head of the Church. A derivative--but subordinate--authority is given also here to the apostles as royal ministers in the kingdom. Jesus' authority in the context is related to Church discipline; by extension, it is also a sacramental authority to forgive sins. *Ignatius Study Bible***

20. CONNECTION: The Church validates the existence of angels with a Feast Day in the liturgical year (October 2) and Pope Francis has said that "Our angel is not only with us but also sees God the Father and is in relationship with him. Our angel accompanies us from the moment we arise to the moment we go to bed and is a link between us and God the Father (02.10.18)." Are you aware of the presence of a guardian angel in your life? Share how you feel you have benefitted from the angel's guidance, friendship and protection.

Begin your prayer time today with the familiar childhood prayer, "*Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.*"

## **DAY FIVE**

**Read Matthew 18:21-35**

21. After Jesus concluded his teachings about the life of the community, Peter approached him asking how often he must forgive others (verse 21). Record Jesus' response from verse 22 (Good memory verse) and comment briefly on what you think this means.

22. Summarize the key points of the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant that Jesus related in verses 23-34.

actions of the king toward the servant (verses 23-27)

actions of the servant toward his fellow servant (verses 28-30)

actions of fellow servants and the king (verses 31-34)

23. Consider the actions of the other servants in reporting the actions of the debtor to the King. As bystanders, what are a few actions we can take to help others on the path of reconciliation?

24. Jesus ended the parable stating, "So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart." What is the difference between forgiveness and forgiveness from your heart? Can you give an example?

25. CONNECTION: Every one of us finds ourselves, at some point in our lives, struggling with the issue of forgiveness. It is almost impossible to live in a family or community and not confront misunderstandings, false perceptions or conflict with others. We can find many reasons not to forgive someone. Yet, the act of forgiveness is a kindness to ourselves and others and can lead to unexpected blessings. Share a story of healing and blessings that have resulted from an act of forgiveness.

Matthew tells us in Chapter 7, "the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you" (verse 2). Pray today for someone you need to forgive as you have been forgiven by your loving Father.

### FINAL QUESTION of the WEEK

This week, we read about the Transfiguration, guardian angels and the Kingdom of heaven. Did something in this lesson or in your prayer time inspire you to make any changes in your life?

Read pages 90-96 in the *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Gospel According to Matthew* by Barbara E. Reid, O.P. 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, D.C. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

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