

The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

TODAY

Jonah 3:1–5, 10
1 Corinthians 7:29–31
Mark 1:14–20

MONDAY*

Mark 3:22–30
"How can Satan cast out Satan?"

TUESDAY

Mark 3:31–35
"Here are my mother and my brothers."

WEDNESDAY* **

Mark 16:15–18
"Go into all the world and proclaim the good news . . ."

THURSDAY*

Mark 4:21–25
" . . . the measure you give will be the measure you get . . ."

FRIDAY

Mark 4:26–34
"With what can we compare the kingdom of God . . . ?"

SATURDAY

Mark 4:35–41
"Have you still no faith?"

*Alternate readings exist for this day.

**Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul the Apostle



Invitations to parties often include the letters RSVP at the end, which is a polite (and brief) way of saying, "please let us know whether or not you will attend." This Sunday's readings look at some of the ways God invites us to join in the divine party.

The story of Jonah is always fun to read. While his three days in the belly of the whale is what we remember most, we often forget that Jonah was in the whale because God wouldn't take "no" for an answer. That, of course, is the message of his preaching in Ninevah; people there believed that God would destroy the city. Which is harder to

believe: that Jonah lived in a whale for three days or that the entire city of Ninevah immediately said "yes" to God's invitation to reform?

The reading from the Gospel of Mark is equally amazing. Imagine these four fishermen immediately walking away from their livelihood because Jesus made them a simple invitation: "Follow Me." Obviously, Peter and Andrew, and James and John, received an offer that they dared not refuse.

The Bible is filled with such invitations—stories where we are invited to do something simple for the Lord, like feeding the hungry, loving those who hate us, and taking up our cross. What is astounding is that so many people don't realize that these invitations are addressed to them. "Oh, I thought you were inviting someone else!"

But God's invitations don't work that way. *You* are invited, and God expects an RSVP from you. Will you accept the invitation?



The Faith of the Church

When God invites us to the divine banquet, he does so to give us something and to get a response. Our response to God is always an act of faith: we never know fully what God expects from us or what the end result will be, but we trust in his compassion and mercy and are filled with his grace (Cf. *US Catholic Catechism for Adults*, p 37).



Questions of the Week

One of the tasks Jesus gave to us as his disciples was for us to invite others to discipleship. Remember, people are more likely to participate in an activity or an event if personally invited by a friend or neighbor.

Adults

What can I do this week to invite a friend or neighbor to follow Christ?

Children

What can I do this week to help a friend or classmate feel invited to follow Christ?

Responding to God's Word . . .

TV evangelists preach a "Gospel of Prosperity": Accept Jesus into your life, and you will know unlimited happiness, wealth, and prosperity.

While being a disciple of Jesus offers joys and blessings beyond imagination, Catholics also recognize that suffering and grief are part of life and part of being a disciple of Christ.

Jesus invited us to pick up our cross and follow him (Mt 10:38), to take his yoke upon our shoulders (Mt 11:29–30). He didn't promise life would be easy, only that he would always be with us and help us carry our burdens.

Saint Theresa of Avila, commenting

on the challenges that come with God's invitation, once said to God, "If this is how you treat your friends, it is no wonder you have so few of them!"

God's invitation is persistent, as Jonah quickly learned. While God allows us to freely say "no" to his invitation, he never gives up on us; he never stops inviting us.

As Francis Thompson wrote in his poem "The Hound of Heaven," God seeks us unceasingly, refusing to take "no" for an answer, never giving up until we are captured by divine love.

This is the invitation that our God has for us.

SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

In the home. Invite family members to join you in a spiritual activity. Consider attending Sunday Mass together, saying grace before and after each meal, gathering to pray the Rosary, or working together to feed the hungry.

In the workplace or in school. Look for ways to invite coworkers and classmates to join you in following Christ. Offer an invitation to join your prayer group, to work on a project to house the homeless, or to attend Mass with you.

In the community. Promote your faith in God in everything you do. Be a living witness to the joy and benefits of accepting God's invitation.



Meditation Moment

John Henry Newman went to Rome to discern if Jesus was calling him to follow him as a Roman Catholic. One day on the return voyage he prayed, "Lead me, O Lord! . . . I cannot see the way. . . . Lead, kindly Light." The words brought such peace to him that he took a pencil and began to write. When he finished, he had written the lyrics to the famous hymn "Lead, Kindly Light." Upon his return to England, he entered the Catholic Church and became one of its greatest leaders.

For reflection . . .

Can I recall a time when, Like Newman, I placed all of my trust in Jesus to lead me through a night of darkness?

LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT . . . / THE NIGHT IS DARK, AND I AM FAR FROM HOME; / LEAD THOU ME ON . . . / I DO NOT ASK TO SEE / THE DISTANT SCENE—ONE STEP ENOUGH FOR ME.

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

FROM *MISSION* BY MARK LINK, SJ

An Invitation to the Feast

Lord, Jesus,
Thank you for inviting me to join in your banquet of love, the Eucharist. I accept your invitation. Help me to be worthy of this wonderful gift.
Thank you for the invitation to discipleship, which I also accept willingly. Help me to take up your cross and to live my life in service to all who need my assistance. Thank you for your invitation to be a witness to you in all I do and say and am. With your love and support, may I be a faithful witness with my life.
Amen.

Carry this thought in your heart as a guide for your faith journey this week.

And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. When God saw . . . how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind . . .

Jonah 3:5, 10

Profile in Faith

Teresa of Avila

Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) was a Carmelite sister who reformed her community and the Church.

Pope Paul VI declared her a Doctor of the Church because of her writings on theology, contemplation, and prayer, and because of the witness she provides on what it means to accept God's invitation to divine love.

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