

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR RCIA DURING SUMMER ORDINARY TIME CYCLE A
– Part Two

14th Sunday

Background: This Sunday's selection is the first from Matthew's exploration of the meaning of the Kingdom/Reign of God. The evangelist often refers to the Kingdom/Reign of Heaven, but that is a pious Jewish euphemism. A Jewish perspective is also needed to appreciate the references to the "learned," which refers to the scribes and Pharisees who were experts in interpreting the Mosaic Law, and to the "yoke," which refers to the multiple commandments of the Law. Instead those who truly come to know God are those who learn how to be "gentle and humble of heart" by following Jesus's commandments of love.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you been tempted to play the role of "best little boy/girl in the world"? How did that work out?
2. What burden has Jesus, our Brother and Teacher, already lifted from your shoulders?
3. Whose burden have you helped lift?
4. Living in the Spirit is love, joy, peace, and freedom. When have you already experienced these fruits of the Spirit?

Practice: In prayer and reflection identify for yourself how you have placed a burden on someone, and discern how to lift it.

15th Sunday

Background: Jesus attempts to explain the Kingdom/Reign of God through parables, through comparisons from his hearers' ordinary lives. The first parable we hear is the Sower and the Seed, which asks us to reflect upon the varying ways in which people respond to the proclamation of the Word of God. Four Sundays ago Jesus sent us to proclaim the Word; now—in the longer form—the early Church shares with us its experience of why some people receive the Word with joy but fail to bring forth fruit in deeds of love.

Discussion Questions

1. When did the Word of God first really speak to you? When did Jesus's message become Good News for you?
2. What is still your biggest challenge to hearing the Word of God?
3. How has that Word already born fruit in your life?
4. How has the Spirit already led you to freedom?

Practice: Pick a Scripture passage, and read it slowly and prayerfully every day this week as you are able. What is it saying to your heart?

16th Sunday

Background: Jesus again uses parables taken from the ordinary experiences of both men and women to explain how the Kingdom/Reign of God is at work in the world. (3 parables in the long form, 1 in the short)

Discussion Questions

1. In the Wheat & the Weeds we are reminded of Jesus's prayer in John's Gospel: "I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from evil." When have you been tempted to judge others and fail to show them the love of God because you thought they were bad people?
2. In the Mustard Seed we are reminded that it is "God who gives the growth." When have you been frustrated by the pace of growth in yourself? In others? What is God teaching you by this experience?
3. In the Woman Making Bread we are reminded that little things can make big things happen. What word or deed of love has helped make you the person that you are?
4. When did you first realize that God is using you to help other people grow?

Practice: Daily say the Lord's Prayer slowly and reflectively, letting the Spirit pray along with you.

17th Sunday

Background: Again, we hear parables of how the Kingdom/Reign of God is at work in the world and in each of us. (3 parables in the long form, 2 in the short)

Discussion Questions

1. What is drawing you towards changing your life? Why do you want to follow Jesus with all your heart?
2. In the Field and in the Pearl, we are asked to be honest about what our actual priorities in life are. How clearly is God's love revealed in your everyday decisions? Do you try to see everything through God's eyes?
3. In the Dragnet we are reminded that daily we are creating our character; we are building piece-by-piece who we are. At your funeral what kind of stories do you want people to be telling about you?
4. What might you personally have to give up to answer the call to live in the Kingdom/Reign of God?

Practice: If you look at your budget, bank statement, or credit card report, how much are you spending on yourself? How much on others?

Final Note: The closing reference to the scribe who can bring forth both the old and the new is probably a reference to the evangelist who respects the Mosaic Law, summarized in the Ten Commandments, but who also proclaims its “fulfillment” in the teachings of Jesus, summarized in the Beatitudes.