

## Cycle B

### Twenty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time

Lectionary #122

#### Reading I: Joshua 24:1-2a. 15-17, 18b

When Joshua asks the people to make a choice as to whom they will **serve**, he reminds them of everything that God has done for them. He asks them to choose between this God who has done so much to help them and the false gods worshipped by their ancestors and neighbors. In today's society, we can be lured into worshipping false "gods": work, prestige, money, power, and possessions. We are surrounded by people who think of these things as their "god" and we can easily be drawn into similar ways of thinking. We are called to value the God who, in Christ Jesus, came to **serve** and not to be **served**. This reading challenges us to ask what motivates us and how we spend our days. **Serving** others is the center of living a Christian life.

#### Reading 2: Ephesians 5:21-32

To understand this passage from Saint Paul's letter to the Church at Ephesus, it is necessary to look at it in a context that takes into the time and social norms of the period into account. Doing this helps one see that the emphasis of this reading is **service**. In the Greco-Roman world, a household code stated the roles for every member of the household so that the home would run smoothly. Saint Paul adds a Christian framework to this code that calls each person to **serve** one another. Each person is expected to live a life of faith rooted in Jesus Christ. Mutual love and **service** need to be the foundation of any Christian household.

#### Gospel: John 6:60-69

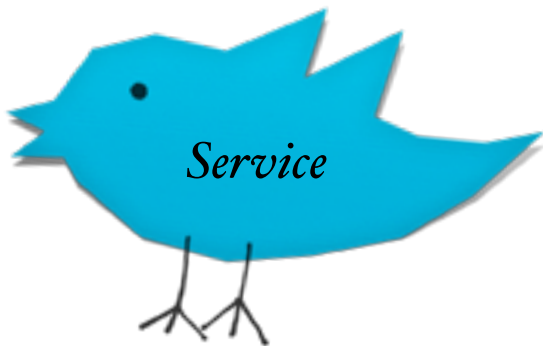
This particular Gospel passage comes after Jesus spoke of eating and drinking his flesh and blood, which was misunderstood by those who heard. Some of the disciples were dismayed by this idea and walked away, so Jesus asks those who remain if they also wish to walk away. Peter's response echoes the response of the Israelites from the first reading when they ask: *Where will we go, you alone have the words of everlasting life?* Jesus is calling for the disciples to make a decision based on their belief; the disciples take this to heart and commit to doing **service** for others. Time and again, Jesus will say to his followers that belief is followed by **service**.



build. plant. grow.  
*the word this week*



ordinary  
time



lectionary  
reading



## children's story



### *The Mitten Tree*

Written by Candice Christiansen  
Illustrated by Elaine Greenstein  
Publication: 2009 The Fulcrum Publishing  
Company  
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ISBN-13: 978-1555917333



character  
education  
activity

**The best way to find yourself  
is to lose yourself in the  
service of others**  
-Mahatma Gandhi

## The Mitten Tree

*The Mitten Tree* is an intergenerational tale that will delight children and adults and teach the importance of **service**. One snowy day, an elderly woman named Sarah watches children waiting at the bus stop. While the children don't seem to notice her, she certainly notices them, especially a little boy who has no mittens to keep his hands warm. That night, Sarah knits the little boy a cozy pair of mittens and places them on the spruce tree for him to discover the next morning. It soon becomes a game: the children begin looking for new mittens each morning as they wait for the bus, and Sarah joyfully knits a new pair each evening. Eventually, someone decides to place a basket of yarn on the spruce tree to assist Sarah in continuing her **service** of providing warm, cozy mittens for the children on cold winter days.

## Serving Those We Don't Know

### Step One:

1. Place a large map of the world on a board or classroom wall.
2. Provide each of the students with a small flag that has their name on it.
3. Have each student look at the world map and decide on a country where they would like to place their flag.
4. Once the student has decided on their country, place the flag on the map with a pin.

### Step Two:

1. Have the students do some research on the people who live in their chosen country, including what their greatest needs are.
2. Have the students include these needs of the various countries in their classroom prayer and in their prayers at home with their families.
3. Invite the students to set aside a portion of their allowance each week to be donated to missionaries or organizations that serve in the country that they have chosen.

**Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word, always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love**  
-St. Therese of Lisieux



**case study**

**Look.  
Feel.  
Know.  
Act.**

## **What could you do today?**

Make a list of all the people you live with and ask them if there is some small way that you could help them. Working with one of your parents, design a chart with the name of each member of the family and the **service** or kindness you will be doing for them. Place a sticker or gold star next to the person's name each time you have completed the **service** or kindness directed to them. You might even want to include your pets on your chart and go out of your way to be kind to them!

## **Look Feel Know Act**

Recognize all the things that you have in your life and give thanks to God for providing those things for you. Take a moment to think about how God provides for those needs in so many different ways and through so many different people. As we grow older and have developed more talents and gifts, we may take a larger role in being of **service** to others. But for now, continue to do those things that you are capable of doing for others when and if they wish for you to do them. It is really important to respect people even as you are doing things for them. Oftentimes, people like to do things on their own, so make sure to check with people to see if they would like for you to do something for them before you do it. For example, think about how when you were little, people tied your shoes for you until you learned how to do it yourself. How would you feel if someone consistently tried to tie your shoes for you now, even though you are capable of doing it yourself?

Oftentimes, Jesus will talk about doing **services** for others discretely. In fact, in one passage from the Gospel of Matthew (6:3) Jesus says: *when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.* In *The Mitten Tree*, this is exactly what happens. Sarah sees a need and responds to it, but the recipients never know where the **service** is coming from. It can be hard to do **service** or acts of kindness secretly, but remember that the most important part is doing **service** for someone in need, not whether or not you receive recognition for it.

**Saint Teresa of Avila composed a prayer over 500 years ago that speaks to our being Christ to others:**



**closing  
tool**

*Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
Compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on  
this world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours. Amen.*



**Santa Clara  
University**

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