



build. plant. grow.
the word this week



ordinary
time



lectionary
reading

Cycle C

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary #153

Reading I: Wisdom 11: 22 - 12: 2

The writer of this particular section of the Book of Wisdom speaks to the fact that the Lord's love and **compassion** is overflowing because the Lord sees that creation is indeed fashioned in the image of the Lord. The Lord is referred to as "the LOVER of souls," and as such wishes for all things to come full circle in that love. To this end, out of love for humanity, the Lord corrects and admonishes so that faults and errors of way may be corrected and thus be drawn back to God. It is true that whenever a human person is outside the circle of God's love, it is because the person put themselves there. God is not one to draw a circle that would exclude; that would not be the nature of God. The **compassion** of God is intended to encompass all.

Reading 2: 2 Thessalonians

1:11-2:2

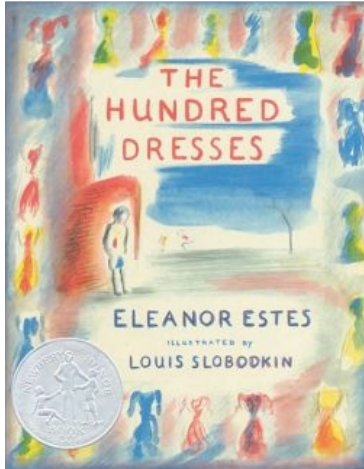
Saint Paul writes to the Thessalonians to assure them that what they learned from him must remain a constant in their lives and not to be carried away by other teachings. The letter speaks to the fact that the Lord's love is constant and that that love must be responded to by living in manner that is worthy of the love poured out upon us. Here again the **compassion** of God calls for a response on our part.

Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

Zacchaeus, very short in stature, becomes a towering symbol of faith in his encounter with Jesus. Here we have a short guy who scrambles up a tree to see this Jesus that he has heard so much about. Jesus takes the opportunity to help him get out of the situation of "being up a tree," because of his past. In the conversation between Zacchaeus and Jesus, we see the two sides of the **compassion** in Jesus' invitation to Zacchaeus and in Zacchaeus' response. The Lord extends forgiveness to us, but there must be a response on our part. It is God's intention that all the lost be found but the lost have to want to be found!



children's story



The Hundred Dresses

Written by Eleanor Estes

Illustrated by Louis Slobodkin

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character
education
activity

Compassion is reaching out to someone with love in order to help them in their given situation (whatever tree they've gotten themselves up into).

The Hundred Dresses

Wanda is being made fun of and even though Maddie wants to defend her, she remains silent. In the story, Wanda tells her classmates that she has a hundred dresses in her closet at home. So why does she wear the same old faded dress to school each day? The teasing that follows seems harmless, but it's not. The book explores the hurt that comes from thoughtless words and offers a painful, but heart-warming lesson in forgiveness. The story is true and it was written because the author wanted to seek Wanda's forgiveness for never speaking out while the hurtful words were being spoken.

Recalling this event stirred the writer to **compassion** and thus she sought forgiveness and to make good for the harm done.

Recall a time when an individual was being hurt by hurtful words or teasing. Did you speak up or did you remain silent? Using hurtful words towards someone is called a sin of commission, because you are one doing it. However, the sin of omission would be not speaking up when you could have. **Compassion** calls us to place ourselves in another's shoes and respond the way we would want someone to respond if that same thing was happening to us.

Reaching Others With Compassion

Step One: Draw a picture of a person up a tree and label what it is that caused them to be separated from the rest of the people on the ground. Draw a ladder that will help the person get out of the tree. What words would be parts of the rungs of the ladder to help the person down?

Step Two: Gather all the pictures of the "person up the tree" and place them together and bind them into your class book of **compassion**.

Compassion is living
“with” passion for
others. Jesus is the
model for living
passionately for others!



case study

Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.

What could you do today?

Compassion may be seen as living “with” passion for others. Think of some of the things that you would like to experience from others in your school and parish and once you have identified those things...be that for others. Many leaders throughout history have lived by the words that we are to become the change we wish to see.

Look Feel Know Act

Compassion invites us to enter into the world of another person. In order to do that we have to have listening ears and an open heart. Once we have entered into the world of the other person, we can get a better idea of what their world is like and how it might be improved. Those who live in a world where they feel ostracized or outside of the group need a way back into the group. We can be the link that opens up the circle to include the person on the outside or the person who is “up a tree.” In some cases **compassion** is extending forgiveness to someone who has deliberately placed themselves on the outside of the group. However, as a component of the forgiveness process, one must be truly sorry and willing to make amends (do penance) to be restored to the group. Again, **compassion** is a two sided coin.

In every one of the scripture readings we see God extending forgiveness and love to each and every person, but there must always be a response on the part of the person being extended that love and forgiveness. The writer of the Book of Wisdom speaks of God’s desire for all to be drawn back into love. Saint Paul reaffirms the love of Christ Jesus to the people of Thessalonica. Jesus and Zaccheaus enter into the dance of **compassion** and forgiveness with Jesus taking the lead and Zaccheaus keeping up with a response.



closing tool

Although **compassion** and forgiveness are not realized until well after the event in *The Hundred Dresses*, **compassion** and forgiveness are always available to us from God. It is unfortunate that, through human weakness, we can miss opportunities to respond in love to others and these can be some of the most hurtful and serious sins. It is crucial to be careful with words we use with others. It might be a good idea to think of each person as fragile when choosing our words or the things we do.

Pray that God will give you the spirit and the willingness to enter into the world of the other person in order to be compassionate. Ask for forgiveness for the times you could have said or done the loving and compassionate thing and chose not to do so.



**Santa Clara
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