



NYC 2023

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SEPTEMBER 2023



THOUGHTS...



THEME

Who am I and Why am I here?



REFLECTION QUESTION

What are you hoping to get out of NCYC?
What do you think God wants you to get out of NCYC?



SCRIPTURE **Jeremiah 29:11-14**

"For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare, not for woe! Plans to give you a future full of hope. When you call me, when you go to pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, you will find me with you, says the LORD."



SONG FOR REFLECTION

Lauren Daigle - Rescue (Official Lyric Video)



SHORT REFLECTION

Tandem Bike

I used to think of God as my observer, my judge, keeping track of the things I did wrong, so as to know whether I merited heaven or hell when I die. He was out there, sort of like a president. I recognized His picture when I saw it, but I didn't really know Him.

But later on, when I met Jesus, it seemed as though life was rather like a bike, but it was a tandem bike, and I noticed that Jesus was in the back helping me pedal. I didn't know just when it was He suggested we change, but life has not been the same since I took the back-seat to Jesus, my Lord. He makes life exciting. When I had control, I thought I knew the way. It was rather boring, but predictable. It was the shortest distance between two points.

But when He took the lead, He knew delightful long cuts, up mountains, and through rocky places and at break-through speeds; it was all I could do to hang on! Even though it often looked like madness, He said, "Pedal!" I was worried and anxious and asked, "Where are you taking me?" He laughed and didn't answer and I started to learn to trust. I forgot my boring life and entered into adventure. And when I'd say, "I'm scared", He'd lean back and touch my hand.

He took me to people with gifts that I needed, gifts of healing, acceptance and joy. They gave me their gifts to take on my journey, our journey, my Lord's and mine. And we were off again. He said, "Give the gifts away; they're extra baggage, too much weight." So I did, to the people we met, and I found in giving I received, and still our burden was light.

I did not trust Him, at first, in control of my life. I thought He'd wreck it, but He knows bike secrets, knows how to make it bend to take sharp corners, jump to clear high rocks, fly to shorten scary passages. And I am learning to shut up and pedal in the strangest places, and I'm beginning to enjoy the view and the cool breeze on my face with my delightful constant companion, Jesus.

And when I'm sure I just can't do any more, He just smiles and says... "Pedal."

GOING DEEPER

Why did God make people?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church breaks open the first creation story of Genesis to expand on why God made human beings. This brief summary is a paraphrase of CCC #355-357.

The first chapter of Genesis (verse 27) says "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them." Human being occupy a unique place in creation. After six days of creating the whole world and every living thing on it, it is when he sees his creation of people that he says "This is Very Good". Genesis says that people are made "in the image of God". People are uniquely able to unite the spiritual with the material world. People are specifically mentioned as being made male and female, with a role to play in co-creating more people (but not at NCYC!). Finally, God established people out of a deep love and friendship.

Of all visible creatures only people are "able to know and love the creator". They are "the only creatures on earth that God has willed for their own sake". That means that God did not make you in order to have a toy or someone to do his dirty work. He made you so that He could share live and love with you. People are the only part of creation that are called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this reason that we were created, and this is the fundamental reason for our dignity.

Saint Catherine of Sienna once said, "What made you establish me with so great a dignity? Certainly the incalculable love by which you have looked on your creature in yourself! You are taken with love for her; for by love indeed you created her, by love you have given her a being capable of tasting your eternal Good."

Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. A person is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself or herself and entering into communion with other persons. And people are called by grace to a covenant with their Creator, to offer God a response of faith and love that no other creature can give.

QUESTIONS:

What part of this passage says the most to you about what god thinks about people?
How do these passages help you to better understand who you are?

ACTIVITY

I Am ...

Check all of the statements below that apply to you. Then circle the five statements that you feel are most important to you.

- I am a sports fan
 - I am an athlete
 - I am a total slob
 - I am a neat freak
 - I am a hot head (get angry easily)
 - I am a cool operator (I don't get angry)
 - I am a jokester (make people laugh)
 - I am quiet and reserved
 - I am a pessimistic person
 - I am an optimistic person
 - I am a leader
 - I am a follower
 - I am a chatterbox (talk a lot)
 - I am a listener
 - I am a gossip
 - I am good at keeping secrets
 - I am a couch potato
 - I am a health fanatic
 - I am a vegan
 - I am a vegetarian
 - I am a Catholic
 - I am a Christian
 - I am religious
 - I am a joyful person
 - I am a prayerful person
 - I am helpful to others
 - I am a hard worker
 - I am a student
 - I am an advocate for change
 - I am an environmentalist
 - I am an immigrant
- I am an artist
 - I am a writer
 - I am a mathematician
 - I am a scientist
 - I am a musician
 - I am a techie
 - I am loveable
 - I am loved
 - I am annoying
 - I am patient
 - I am generous
 - I am lonely
 - I am stressed out
 - I am giddy and bubbly
 - I am proud of who I am
 - I am curious
 - I am bored
 - I am easily distracted
 - I am super focused
 - I am creative
 - I am an explorer
 - I am a rule follower
 - I am a rule breaker
 - I am a good friend
 - I am career-focused
 - I am mature
 - I am a peacemaker
 - I am an instigator
 - I am a country music fan
 - I am a hip-hop fan
 - I am a rock music fan

Share your answers with others. Discuss:

1. What are some qualities that you had in common with others?
2. What are some qualities that are unique to you?
3. In what ways is it a challenge to be with people who are different from you? In what ways is that a blessing?



THOUGHTS...



OCTOBER 2023



THOUGHTS...



THEME

What do I need? What am I looking for?



REFLECTION QUESTION

What does it mean to be a part of a faith community?



SCRIPTURE **Acts 2:42-47**

"[The early Christians] devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all people. And every day, the LORD added to their number those who were being saved."



SONG FOR REFLECTION

MercyMe - Almost Home (Official Music Video)



SHORT REFLECTION

Chopsticks

Chopsticks in Heaven

Once upon a time, in a temple nestled in the misty end of south hill, lived a pair of monks. One old and one young.

"What are the differences between Heaven and Hell?" the young monk asked the learned master one day.

"There are no material differences," replied the old monk peacefully.

"None at all?" asked the confused young monk.

"Yes. Both Heaven and Hell look the same. They all have a dining hall with a big hot pot in the center in which some delicious noodles are boiled, giving off an appetizing scent," said our old priest. "The size of the pan and the number of people sitting around the pot are the same in these two places."

"But oddly, each diner is given a pair of meter-long chopsticks and must use them to eat the noodles. And to eat the noodles, one must hold the chopsticks properly at their ends, no cheating is allowed," the Zen master went on to describe to our young monk.

"In the case of Hell, people are always starved because no matter how hard they try, they fail to get the noodles into their mouths," said the old priest.

"But isn't it the same happens to the people in Heaven?" the junior questioned.

"No. They can eat because they each feed the person sitting opposite them at the table. You see, that is the difference between Heaven and Hell," explained the old monk.

GOING DEEPER

Why Do People Search for God?

The following is a paraphrase from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC #27-30) which addresses the inherent desire people have for God.

The desire for God is written in the human heart, because people are created by God and for God; and God never ceases to pull people closer to Him. Only in God will people find the truth and happiness that they never stops searching for.

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes), from Vatican II (1965) says, "The dignity of human being rests above all on the fact that humans are called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to people as soon as they come into being. For if humanity exists it is because God has created them through love, and through love continues to hold them in existence. Humans cannot live fully according to truth unless they freely acknowledges that love and entrust themselves to their creator."

In many ways, throughout history down to the present day, people have given expression to their quest for God in their religious beliefs and behavior: in their prayers, sacrifices, rituals, meditations, and so forth. These forms of religious expression, despite the ambiguities they often bring with them, are so universal that one may well call people religious beings.

The Acts of the Apostles (Chapter 17) says, "From one ancestor [God] made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and He allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for Him and find him - though indeed He is not far from each one of us. For "in Him we live and move and have our being."

But this intimate and vital bond of people to God can be forgotten, overlooked, or even explicitly rejected. Such attitudes can have different causes: revolt against evil in the world; religious ignorance or indifference; the cares and riches of this world; the scandal of bad example on the part of believers; currents of thought hostile to religion; finally, that attitude of sinful people which makes them hide from God out of fear and flee his call.

"Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice" (Psalm 105). Although people can forget God or reject him, He never ceases to call every person to seek Him, so as to find life and happiness. But this search for God demands every effort of intellect, a sound will, "an upright heart", as well as the witness of others who teach us to seek God.

St. Augustine wrote, "You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is without measure. And man, so small a part of your creation, wants to praise you: this man, though clothed with mortality and bearing the evidence of sin and the proof that you withstand the proud. Despite everything, man, though but a small a part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

QUESTIONS:

When have you felt most drawn to God?

What are the some of the reasons that the desire to be closer to God "can be forgotten, overlooked, or rejected" in your life?



EARLY NOVEMBER 2023



THOUGHTS...



THEME

How do I fit into all of this?



REFLECTION QUESTION

What am I most excited about? What am I most nervous about?




SCRIPTURE **1 Corinthians 12: 4-5**

"There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same LORD."



SONG FOR REFLECTION

Matt Maher - Alive & Breathing feat. Elle Limebear (Lyric Video)



MATT MAHER ALIVE & BREATHING



SHORT REFLECTION

The Fish and the Monkey

The fish loved the river. It felt blissful swimming around in its clear blue waters. One day while swimming closer to the river banks it hears a voice say, "hey, fish, how is the water?"

The fish raises its head above the water and sees a monkey seated on a branch of a tree.

The fish replies, "The water is nice and warm, thank you".

The monkey feels jealous of the fish and wants to put it down. It says, "why don't you come out of the water and climb this tree. The view from here is amazing!"

The fish, feeling a little sad, replies, "I don't know how to climb a tree and I cannot survive without water".

Hearing this the monkey makes fun of the fish saying, "you are totally worthless if you cannot climb a tree!"

The fish starts thinking about this remark day and night and becomes extremely depressed, "yes, the monkey is right", it would think, "I cannot even climb a tree, I must be worthless."

A sea-horse sees the fish feeling all depressed and asks it what the reason was. Upon knowing the reason, the sea-horse laughs and says, "If the monkey thinks you are worthless for not being able to climb the tree, then the monkey is worthless too 'cause it cannot swim or live under water."

Upon hearing this the fish suddenly realized how gifted it was; that it had the ability to survive under water and swim freely which the monkey never could!

The fish feels thankful to God for giving it such an amazing ability.

This story takes from Einstein's quote, "Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid".

How Can We Really Know God?

You are in the final stages of a great opportunity to explore your faith and your Church. People approach God in a variety of ways. You are most welcome to use NCYC however you need so you can grow deeper in your own faith.

The following is a paraphrase of the Catechism's guidance on the different ways that people come to know God (#31-35).

Created in God's image and called to know and love Him, the person who seeks God discovers certain ways of coming to know Him. These are also called proofs for the existence of God, not in the sense of proofs in the natural sciences, but rather in the sense of "converging and convincing arguments", which allow us to attain certainty about the truth. These "ways" of approaching God from creation have two different approaches: the physical world, and the human person.

The world. Starting from observing the world's order and beauty, one can come to a knowledge of God as the origin and the end of the universe.

As St. Paul says of the Gentiles, "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made" (Rom 1:19-20).

And St. Augustine issues this challenge, "Question the beauty of the earth, question the beauty of the sea, question the beauty of the air distending and diffusing itself, question the beauty of the sky... question all these realities. Everyone admits that this is beautiful. Their beauty is a profession. These beauties are subject to change. Who made them if not the Beautiful One who is not subject to change?"

The human person. With our openness to truth and beauty, our sense of moral goodness, our freedom and the voice of our conscience, with our longings for the infinite and for happiness, we question ourselves about God's existence. In all this we discerns signs of our spiritual soul. The soul, the seed of eternity we bear in ourselves, which cannot be reduced to the merely material, can have its origin only in God.

The world, and the human person, attest that they contain within themselves neither their beginning nor their final end, but rather that they participate in Being itself, which alone is without origin or end. Thus, in different ways, people can come to know that there exists a reality which is the first cause and final end of all things, a reality that is known as God.

Our faculties make us capable of coming to a knowledge of the existence of a personal God. But for us to be able to enter into real intimacy with Him, God willed both to reveal Himself to us and to give us the grace of being able to welcome this revelation in faith. The proofs of God's existence, however, can predispose one to faith and help one to see that faith is not opposed to reason.

THURSDAY
NOVEMBER 16
2023



THOUGHTS...



THEME

I am a part of something bigger



REFLECTION QUESTION

When I picture God in my imagination, what do I see?



SCRIPTURE John 1:1-5

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through his was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."



SONG FOR REFLECTION

The Father's House (Studio Version) - Cory Asbury



SHORT REFLECTION

The Starfish

Once upon a time, there was an old man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach every morning before he began his work. Early one morning, he was walking along the shore after a big storm had passed and found the vast beach littered with starfish as far as the eye could see, stretching in both directions.

Off in the distance, the old man noticed a small boy approaching. As the boy walked, he paused every so often and as he grew closer, the man could see that he was occasionally bending down to pick up an object and throw it into the sea. The boy came closer still and the man called out, "Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?"

The young boy paused, looked up, and replied "Throwing starfish into the ocean. The tide has washed them up onto the beach and they can't return to the sea by themselves," the youth replied. "When the sun gets high, they will die, unless I throw them back into the water."

The old man replied, "But there must be tens of thousands of starfish on this beach. I'm afraid you won't really be able to make much of a difference."

The boy bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it as far as he could into the ocean. Then he turned, smiled and said, "It made a difference to that one!"

*adapted from The Star Thrower, by Loren Eiseley (1907 - 1977)
Found on EventsForChange.wordpress.com*

GOING DEEPER

Who Are The People of God?

NCYC has thousands of young people and adults from all walks of life and all corners of the country come together as one. These people are all unique and have a variety of customs. They are all united, as one people of God, under the umbrella of the Universal Catholic Church.

The following is a paraphrase of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (#781-782), which spells out the definition of the Catholic Church as the People of God.

At all times and in every race, anyone who fears God and does what is right has been acceptable to Him. God has, however, willed to make people holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge Him and serve Him in holiness. He, therefore, chose the Israelite race to be his own people and established a covenant with it. He called together a race made up of Jews and Gentiles which would be one, not according to the flesh, but in the Spirit.

What are the characteristics of the People of God?

The People of God, the Church, is marked by characteristics that clearly distinguish it from all other religious, ethnic, political, or cultural groups found in history:

It is the "People of God". God is not the property of any one people. But He acquired a people for himself from those who previously were not otherwise united.

One becomes a member of this people not by a physical birth, but by being "born anew," a birth "of water and the Spirit," that is, by faith in Christ, and Baptism.

This People has for its Head Jesus the Christ (the anointed, the Messiah). Because the same anointing, the Holy Spirit, flows from the head into the body, this is a "messianic" (anointed) people.

The status of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons and daughters of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in a temple.

The central law of the People of God is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us. This is the "new" law of the Holy Spirit.

The mission of the People of God is to be salt of the earth and light of the world. The Church is a most sure seed of unity, hope, and salvation for the whole human race.

The Church's destiny, finally, is the Kingdom of God which has been begun by God himself on earth and which must be further extended until it has been brought to perfection by him at the end of time.

QUESTIONS:

How does this understanding of the Church compare to what you thought the Church was?
Which characteristic of the People of God is most exciting or inspirational to you?

ACTIVITY

Ripple Effect

What you do matters! You have the ability, through small, simple actions, to make a significantly positive impact in the world.

First, select a few random words.
Remember, your choices matter!

1. Adverb: _____
2. Noun: _____
3. Adjective: _____
4. Emotion: _____
5. Adjective: _____
6. Action Verb: _____
7. Animal: _____
8. Noun: _____
9. Friend's name: _____
10. Food: _____
11. Location in Indianapolis: _____
12. Sports team: _____
13. Movie: _____
14. Beverage: _____

Read the following story, inserting the words you wrote when it's time.

While walking around at NCYC you see another teenager (1) carrying a (2) that was too (3) for their group leader to carry. You could tell they were (4) because their face was all (5). You make the decision to (6) over to them and offer your assistance. You say, "Hi, can I offer you a hand? The teenager is so grateful that they squeal like a(n) (7)! "You made my day!", says the teenager. Please accept my (8) hat as a token of my gratitude." You are excited because you had thought that hat would be a good gift for (9).

Later that night, and still full of gratitude for your help, that same teenager is eating (10) with friends at (11). They see a teenager who is sitting all by themselves, probably because they are wearing a (12) jersey. Filled with gratitude and compassion, the teen you helped, invites the lonely teen to join them. The teens spend a few minutes talking about NCYC and (13). They both have a good laugh, and one laughs so hard they spit (14) out their nose! Everyone is happy, and knows God's love because you took the time to help.



THOUGHTS...

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. What are some things you did today that probably made a positive difference on your group?
2. What are some things others did for you that brightened your day?
3. What is one positive thing you could do tomorrow to make NCYC a better experience for others?

FRIDAY
NOVEMBER 17
2023



THOUGHTS...



THEME

I am part of the body of Christ



REFLECTION QUESTION

When God looks at me, what does He see?



SCRIPTURE 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

"As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you." Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy."



SONG FOR REFLECTION

Rend Collective - Build Your Kingdom Here



SHORT REFLECTION

The Pear Tree and the Seasons of Life

There was once a man who had four young sons.

Wanting to teach them about the dangers of judging things too rapidly, he decided to send each of them on a journey, one after the other, to a distant pear tree.

Each son went in a different season, the first in winter, the second in spring, and so on.

At the end of the year he brought his children together and asked them what they'd seen.

The son who'd traveled in winter described a gnarled, twisted, and barren tree that stood stark and ugly against the land.

The son who went in spring disagreed. No, he said, the tree seemed full of hope and promise, with green buds along its branches.

The third son, who'd traveled in summer, disagreed once more. The pear tree he'd seen was covered in beautiful blossoms that looked and smelled divine.

Finally, the last son, who'd made the journey in fall, disagreed again, describing a tree laden with sweet and delicious pears that tasted better than any he'd eaten before.

When each son had spoken, the father said they were all correct, because they'd only seen one season of the pear tree's life.

He explained to his sons that it's foolish and impossible to judge something in this manner.

The essence of something, whether it's a tree or their fellow man, can only be measured as a whole, at the end of the year, having seen it in its fullness. To make your judgment in winter is to miss the promise of spring, the beauty of summer, and the fruit in fall.

Moral of the story:

Refuse to judge yourself, life, or other people based upon a single mistake or challenging time. Refuse to let the pain of one season destroy the joy of those to come.

ACTIVITY

Daily Challenge(s)

With others in your group, pick the challenge that you feel is most interesting to you.

OPTION 1: Building Connections

Your mission is to connect with other teens like you at NCYC. Below is a list of 20 different kinds of people you will find at NCYC. Try to find all 20! You cannot count anyone from the Archdiocese of Dubuque. Don't just check the box, but talk to each person you meet. Ask about why they are at NCYC. Tell them why you came to NCYC.

- A teenager from Indianapolis
- A teenager from Iowa, but NOT from the Archdiocese of Dubuque
- A teenager who has a different native language than English
- A teenager from the west coast of the United States
- A teenager from the east coast of the United States
- A teenager from a southern state
- A teenager from a different country
- A teenager who likes the same sports team as you
- A teenager who also likes your favorite musical artist/group
- A teenager who has a different ethnicity than you
- A Youth Ministry Leader
- A priest
- A religious sister
- A religious brother
- A bishop
- An international missionary (someone who serves in another country)
- A teen with a nose ring
- A teen who is considering a religious vocation (might be a priest, sister, or brother)
- A Keynote or MC from NCYC 2023
- A member of NFCYM staff
- A diocesan director (not from the Archdiocese of Dubuque)

At the end of the day, share with your small group about who you talked to and what you found most interesting.

ACTIVITY CONTINUED...

Daily Challenge(s)

With others in your group, pick the challenge that you feel is most interesting to you.

OPTION 2: Prayer Explorers

NCYC is a safe place to experiment with a wide variety of prayer experiences. Your challenge is to try some of those opportunities and prayerfully reflect on the styles of prayer that you experience.

Below are ten different ways that you can pray at NCYC. Try two or three of these each day. Share your experiences with your group.

Ways to pray:

1. Daily Mass
2. Sacrament of Reconciliation
3. Eucharistic Adoration
4. Pray the Rosary
5. Liturgy of the Hours
(Ask a priest, deacon, or member of a religious community to do this with you)
6. Listening Prayer
(sit in the prayer space, and listen quietly to God's voice. What is God saying to you?)
7. Lectio Divina (praying with Scripture)
(Read a passage of Scripture. Read it again slowly. Prayerfully discern what God is saying to you through that passage)
8. Guided Meditation
9. Praise & Worship (sing along with musical leaders in prayer)
10. Praying with prayer partner (try this with five different NCYC participants today)
(Before you begin, ask each other what you would like prayers for. Then, talk to God in your own words, asking God for the prayer request of your partner.)

ACTIVITY CONTINUED...

Daily Challenge(s)

With others in your group, pick the challenge that you feel is most interesting to you.

OPTION 3: Wisdom Figures

With your group, list 20 different questions about your Catholic faith. Find the answers from Catholic experts, keynotes, or breakout sessions today and tomorrow. Share what you learn with your group.

List your Questions about the Catholic Faith here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____

Select five questions that you are going to research. Find "Catholic Wisdom Figures" (e.g. priests, speakers, other adult leaders) how they would answer each question. Write down their responses and share them with your group later.

Bonus: Consult the Catechism of the Catholic Church (<http://www.scborromeo.org/cc/index/a.htm>) to see if the Church has an official answer to your question.



WISDOM FIGURES - ANSWERS.
Write what your experts are saying here.



WISDOM FIGURES - ANSWERS.
Write what your experts are saying here.

Why is the Church Known as the Body of Christ?

Being a Catholic is more than just a label, it means being a part of something bigger, and sharing that identity with others. You bring unique gifts and strengths to the Church. Who you are matters. You are an important member of this community which is represented as the metaphorical Body of Christ.

The following is a paraphrase of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (#790-795).

Believers who respond to God's word and become members of Christ's Body, become intimately united with him.

During the 2nd Vatican Council, the Church wrote a "Dogmatic Constitution" which is known as "Lumen Gentium" (Light to the Nations, or LG) paragraph seven says, "In that body the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe, and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his Passion and glorification."

This is especially true of Baptism, which unites us to Christ's death and Resurrection, and the Eucharist, by which "really sharing in the body of the Lord... we are taken up into communion with him and with one another." (LG 7)

The body's unity does not do away with the diversity of its members.

"In the building up of Christ's Body there is engaged a diversity of members and functions. There is only one Spirit who, according to his own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives his different gifts for the welfare of the Church." (LG 7)

The unity of the Mystical Body produces and stimulates charity among the faithful.

"From this it follows that if one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with him, and if one member is honored, all the members together rejoice." (LG 7)

Finally, the unity of the Mystical Body triumphs over all human divisions.

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:27-28)

Christ is the head of the body, the Church. He is the central figure of creation and redemption. Raised to the Father's glory, he is above all others in every regard, especially in the Church, through whom He extends His reign over all things.

Christ unites us with his Passover. All His members must strive to resemble him, "until Christ be formed" (Gal 4:19) in them. For this reason we are taken up into the mysteries of his life, associated with his sufferings as the body with its head, suffering with him, that with him we may be glorified.

CONTINUED...

Why is the Church Known as the Body of Christ?

Christ provides for our growth. To make us grow toward him, our head, he provides in his Body, the Church, the gifts and assistance by which we help one another along the way of salvation.

Christ and his Church thus together make up the "whole Christ" (Christus totus). The Church is one with Christ. The saints are acutely aware of this unity.

St. Augustine said, "Let us rejoice then and give thanks that we have become not only Christians, but Christ himself. Do you understand and grasp, brethren, God's grace toward us? Marvel and rejoice. We have become Christ! For if he is the head, we are the members; he and we together are the whole person. The fullness of Christ then is the head and the members. But what does "head and members" mean? Christ and the Church!"

St. Pope Gregory the Great said, "Our redeemer has shown himself to be one person with the holy Church whom he has taken to himself."

St. Thomas Aquinas said, "Head and members form as it were one and the same mystical person."

A reply of St. Joan of Arc to her judges sums up the faith of the holy doctors and the good sense of the believer: "About Jesus Christ and the Church, I simply know they're just one thing, and we shouldn't complicate the matter."

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 18
2023



THOUGHTS...



THEME

Christ lives in me.



REFLECTION QUESTION

What is uniquely amazing about me?



SCRIPTURE John 6:56-58

"[Jesus said,] whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever."



SONG FOR REFLECTION

Matthew West - The God Who Stays (Official Music Video)



SHORT REFLECTION

What Kind of People Live Here?

A man entered a village and went to the monastery on the edge of town, where he was welcomed by an old monk, the wise man of the village. The visitor said, "I am deciding whether I should move here or not. I'm wondering what kind of neighborhood this is. Can you tell me about the people here?"

The old monk said, "Tell me what kind of people lived where you came from." The visitor said, "Oh, they were highway robbers, cheats and liars." The monk said, "You know, those are exactly the same kinds of people who live here." The visitor left the village and never came back.

Half an hour later, another man entered the village. He sought out the wise old man and said, "I'm thinking of moving here. Can you tell me what kind of people live here?" Again the monk said, "Tell me what kind of people lived where you came from." The visitor said, "Oh, they were the kindest, gentlest, most compassionate, most loving people. I shall miss them terribly. The old monk said, "Those are exactly the kinds of people who live here, too."

When we recognize the divine source of happiness within us, we can recognize and hail that same divine light in others—even those who have not found their innate joy and try, therefore, to drag others down to their sad level. The remarkable secret is, you don't have to go there!

Isn't it wondrous that our happiness isn't dependent on anyone else? The light of Christ is within each of us. We carry it with us wherever we go, and it is able to sustain our joy in any situation, in any neighborhood, among any people.

GOING DEEPER

What is the Point in Receiving the Eucharist?

As members of the Body of Christ, we are united as one with Christ. But, the mystery doesn't end there. Christ also dwells inside of you, through His Holy Spirit, and especially through the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

The following is a paraphrase of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1380 & 1393-1397).

It is highly fitting that Christ should have wanted to remain present to his Church through the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Since Christ was about to take his departure from his own in his visible form, he wanted to give us his sacramental presence. Since he was about to offer himself on the cross to save us, he wanted us to have the memorial of the love with which he loved us "to the end," (John 13:1) even to the giving of his life. In his Eucharistic presence he remains mysteriously in our midst as the one who loved us and gave himself up for us (Gal 2:20), and he remains under signs that express and communicate this love.

Saint Pope John Paul II said, "The Church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love. Let us not refuse the time to go to meet him in adoration, in contemplation full of faith, and open to making amends for the serious offenses and crimes of the world. Let our adoration never cease.

The Eucharist unites us to Christ and His Church in several specific ways.

Holy Communion augments our union with Christ. The principal fruit of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is an intimate union with Christ Jesus. Indeed, the Lord said: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:56). Life in Christ has its foundation in the Eucharistic banquet: "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me" (John 6:57).

Holy Communion separates us from sin. The body of Christ we receive in Holy Communion is "given up for us," and the blood we drink "shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins." For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins.

As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity, which tends to be weakened in daily life. According to the Council of Trent in the 16th century, this living charity wipes away venial sins.

By the same charity that it enkindles in us, the Eucharist preserves us from future mortal sins. The more we share the life of Christ and progress in his friendship, the more difficult it is to break away from him by mortal sin.

CONTINUED...

What is the Point in Receiving the Eucharist?

The unity of the Mystical Body: the Eucharist makes the Church. Those who receive the Eucharist are united more closely to Christ. Through it Christ unites them to all the faithful in one body – the Church. Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens this incorporation into the Church, already achieved by Baptism. In Baptism we have been called to form but one body. The Eucharist fulfills this call.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:16-17).

The Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brothers and sisters.

St. John Chrysostom said, "You have tasted the Blood of the Lord, yet you do not recognize your brother. You dishonor this table when you do not judge worthy of sharing your food someone judged worthy to take part in this meal. God freed you from all your sins and invited you here, but you have not become more merciful."



THOUGHTS...

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 19 2023



THOUGHTS...



THEME

I am fully alive!



REFLECTION QUESTION

How can I celebrate the person God made me to be?
How did it feel to be a part of a faith community?



SCRIPTURE **John 10:7-15**

"So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came [before me] are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep."



SONG FOR REFLECTION

Newsboys - God's Not Dead

**GOD'S
NOT
DEAD**



SHORT REFLECTION

Carpe Diem!

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."

-Mahatma Gandhi

"Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin."

-Mother Theresa

"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all."

-Helen Keller, The Open Door

"I, not events, have the power to make me happy or unhappy today. I can choose which it shall be. Yesterday is dead, tomorrow hasn't arrived yet. I have just one day, today, and I'm going to be happy in it."

-Groucho Marx

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

- Matthew 6:34

ACTIVITY

(now) I Am ...

Check all of the statements below that apply to you. Then circle the five statements that you feel are most important to you.

- I am an artist
- I am a writer
- I am a mathematician
- I am a scientist
- I am a musician
- I am a techie
- I am loveable
- I am loved
- I am annoying
- I am patient
- I am generous
- I am lonely
- I am stressed out
- I am giddy and bubbly
- I am proud of who I am
- I am curious
- I am bored
- I am easily distracted
- I am super focused
- I am creative
- I am an explorer
- I am a rule follower
- I am a rule breaker
- I am a good friend
- I am career-focused
- I am mature
- I am a peacemaker
- I am an instigator
- I am a country music fan
- I am a hip-hop fan
- I am a rock music fan
- I am a sports fan
- I am an athlete
- I am a total slob
- I am a neat freak
- I am a hot head (get angry easily)
- I am a cool operator (I don't get angry)
- I am a jokester (make people laugh)
- I am quiet and reserved
- I am a pessimistic person
- I am an optimistic person
- I am a leader
- I am a follower
- I am a chatterbox (talk a lot)
- I am a listener
- I am a gossip
- I am good at keeping secrets
- I am a couch potato
- I am a health fanatic
- I am a vegan
- I am a vegetarian
- I am a Catholic
- I am a Christian
- I am religious
- I am a joyful person
- I am a prayerful person
- I am helpful to others
- I am a hard worker
- I am a student
- I am an advocate for change
- I am an environmentalist
- I am an immigrant

Share your answers with others. Discuss:

1. What statement about you feels even more true after NCYC than it was before?
2. Which statement, if any, feels less true now that it did before?
3. Based on your selections, how has your view of yourself changed since the last time you did this activity?

What Does It Mean to Live Like Jesus?

NCYC is a rich experience that has connected you with thousands of other teens like you. Now, it's your turn to think about what you experienced this weekend. Is being a person of faith important to you? Are you willing to lean in to doing what it takes to be fully alive?

The following is a paraphrase of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1691-1696) about what it means to take on life in Christ.

St. Leo the Great once said, "Christian, recognize your dignity and, now that you share in God's own nature, do not return to your former base condition by sinning. Remember who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Never forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of the Kingdom of God."

By the sacraments of rebirth, Christians have become "children of God" (John 1:12), "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). Coming to see in the faith their new dignity, Christians are called to lead henceforth a life "worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil 1:27). They are made capable of doing so by the grace of Christ and the gifts of his Spirit, which they receive through the sacraments and through prayer.

Christ Jesus always did what was pleasing to the Father, and always lived in perfect communion with him. Likewise Christ's disciples are invited to live in the sight of the Father "who sees in secret," in order to become "perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt 5:48).

Incorporated into Christ by Baptism, Christians are "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (2 Cor 6:11) and so participate in the life of the Risen Lord. Following Christ and united with him, Christians can strive to be "imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love" (Eph 5:1-2) by conforming their thoughts, words and actions to the "mind which is yours in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5), and by following his example.

"Justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (2 Cor 6:11), "sanctified and called to be saints" (1 Cor 1:2), Christians have become the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). The Holy Spirit teaches them to pray to the Father and prompts them to bring about "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22-25) by charity in action. Healing the wounds of sin, the Holy Spirit renews us through a spiritual transformation. The Holy Spirit enlightens and strengthens us to live as "children of light" through "all that is good and right and true" (Eph 5:8-9).

People who are lost or trapped in sin may follow a path that leads to loneliness, hurtfulness, or destruction. The way of Christ, however, leads to life... and not just an ordinary life, but one that is fully alive.

Go, in peace to love and serve the world. Thanks be to God!



THOUGHTS...

DECEMBER 2023



THOUGHTS...

THEME
Keepin' the Faith



REFLECTION QUESTION

How has your experience of NCYC prepared you for living your life differently when you got home?
How can you share your joy of the faith with your family, your peers, and your parish community?



SCRIPTURE **2 Timothy 4:7**

"I have competed well; I have finished the race;
I have kept the faith!"



SONG FOR REFLECTION

for KING & COUNTRY - The Proof Of Your Love (Official Music Video)



SHORT REFLECTION

A Coal from the Fire

A member of a certain church, who previously had been attending services regularly, stopped going. After a few weeks, the pastor decided to visit him. It was a chilly evening. The pastor found the man at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire.

Guessing the reason for his pastor's visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a big chair near the fireplace and waited. The pastor made himself comfortable but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the play of the flames around the burning logs.

After some minutes, the pastor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone. Then he sat back in his chair, still silent. The host watched all this in quiet fascination.

As the one lone ember's flame diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and "dead as a doornail."

Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting.

Just before the pastor was ready to leave, he picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it.

As the pastor reached the door to leave, his host said, "Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I shall be back in church next Sunday."

GOING DEEPER

What Does the Church Teach About Freedom and Responsibility?

Now that NCYC is over, what you do next is entirely up to you. You are FREE to make your choices. Will you CHOOSE to double down and pursue a life of faith? Or, will you let this one slide, and return to your life as if nothing really happened? It's your call!

Being a person of faith isn't always easy. It takes commitment and discipline... and responsibility.

The following is a paraphrase of the Catechism's guidance on freedom and responsibility (#1730-1736).

God created us to be rational beings, giving us the dignity of people who can initiate and control our own actions. God willed that we should be 'left in the hand of our own counsel,' so that we might of our own accord seek our Creator and freely attain His full and blessed perfection by being drawn to Him.

St. Irenaeus said, "Humans are rational and therefore like God; they are created with free will and are master over their acts."

Freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one's own responsibility. By free will one shapes one's own life. Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness; it attains its perfection when directed toward God, our beatitude.

As long as freedom has not bound itself definitively to its ultimate good which is God, there is the possibility of choosing between good and evil, and thus of growing in perfection or of failing and sinning. This freedom characterizes properly human acts. It is the basis of praise or blame, merit or reproach.

The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to "the slavery of sin" (Romans 6:17).

Freedom makes us responsible for our acts to the extent that they are voluntary. Progress in virtue, knowledge of the good, and the practice of self-discipline enhance the mastery of the will over its acts.

CONTINUED...

What Does the Church Teach About Freedom and Responsibility?

The blame, fault, or responsibility for an action can be diminished or even nullified by ignorance, inadvertence, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachments, and other psychological or social factors.

Every act directly willed is properly assigned to the one who made the choice.

Thus the Lord asked Eve after the sin in the garden: "What is this that you have done?" (Gen 3:13). He asked Cain the same question (Gen 4:10). The prophet Nathan questioned David in the same way after he committed adultery with the wife of Uriah and had him murdered (2 Sam 12:7-15).

An action can be indirectly voluntary when it results from negligence regarding something one should have known or done: for example, an accident arising from ignorance of traffic laws.

An effect can be tolerated without being willed by the one performing an action; for instance, a mother's exhaustion from tending her sick child. A bad effect is not imputable (worthy of blame) if it was not willed either as an end or as a means of an action, e.g., a death a person incurs in aiding someone in danger. For a bad effect to be imputable (worthy of blame) it must be foreseeable and the agent must have the possibility of avoiding it, as in the case of manslaughter caused by a drunken driver.

Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. The right to the exercise of freedom, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person. This right must be recognized and protected by civil authority within the limits of the common good and public order.

ACTIVITY

What Now?

Now that NCYC is behind you, and your future is ahead of you, it's time to start thinking about the choices you are going to make from now on.

Write five deliberate choices you are going to make and then circle whether this is a small choice, a moderate choice, or a major life choice. Please know that a small choice for you may be a really big choice for others, so be sure that you circle the one that is best for you.

Consider the following options. How will you be involved with your parish? What friends will you hang out with? What will you do with your free time? What will your prayer life look like? How will you feel about your faith in the future?

CHOICE 1 (small moderate major)

CHOICE 2 (small moderate major)

CHOICE 3 (small moderate major)

CHOICE 4 (small moderate major)

CHOICE 5 (small moderate major)

JANUARY 2024



THOUGHTS...

THEME

What do I need (now)? What am I looking for (now)?



REFLECTION QUESTION

What do I need from my faith community, my peers,
and my family to keep my faith alive?



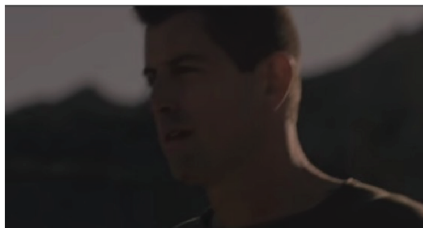
SCRIPTURE Galatians 5:22-23

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,
generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."



SONG FOR REFLECTION

Jeremy Camp - Keep Me In The Moment



SHORT REFLECTION

Footprints in the Sand

One night I dreamed a dream.
As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.
Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.
For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,
One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,
especially at the very lowest and saddest times,
there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.
"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,
You'd walk with me all the way.
But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,
there was only one set of footprints.
I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you
Never, ever, during your trials and testings.
When you saw only one set of footprints,
It was then that I carried you."

GOING DEEPER

What Are Virtues?

As a young person who is trying to live your faith, there is a lot you will have to figure out. What you need from the Church, from your peers, and from God at this point in your life is unique to you. You do need to spend time praying and thinking about that.

In order to help you discern what it is you need most, the Catechism of the Catholic Church provides some wisdom on "virtues" which are good or admirable qualities to help you.

What follows is a paraphrase of the Catechism (#1804-1809).

Human virtues are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life. The virtuous person is one who freely practices the good.

The moral virtues are acquired by human effort. They are the fruit and seed of morally good acts; they dispose all the powers of the human being for communion with divine love.

Four virtues play a pivotal role and accordingly are called "cardinal" (which comes from *cardi*, as in "heart"); all the others are grouped around them. The four cardinal virtues are: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. "If anyone loves righteousness, wisdom's labors are virtues; for she teaches temperance and prudence, justice, and courage" (Wisdom 8:7). These virtues are praised under other names in many passages of Scripture.

Prudence is the virtue that uses practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right method of achieving it. Proverbs 14:15 says, "the prudent man looks where he is going." Prudence is "right reason in action," writes St. Thomas Aquinas. It is not to be confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. It is called "the charioteer of the virtues"; it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience. The prudent person determines and directs his or her conduct in accordance with this judgment. With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid.

Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give what is properly due to God and one's neighbor. Justice toward God is called the "virtue of religion." Justice toward others disposes one to respect the rights of each person and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbor. "You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor" (Lev. 19:15). "Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven" (Col. 4:11).

Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

CONTINUED...

What Are Virtues?

Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion. Temperance is often praised in the Old Testament. "Do not follow your inclination and strength, walking according to the desires of your heart" (Sir. 5:2). "Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites" (Sir. 18:30). In the New Testament it is called "moderation" or "sobriety." We ought "to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world" (Titus 2:12).

St. Augustine said, "To live well is nothing other than to love God with all one's heart, with all one's soul and with all one's efforts; from this it comes about that love is kept whole and uncorrupted (through temperance). No misfortune can disturb it (and this is fortitude). It obeys only [God] (and this is justice), and is careful in discerning things, so as not to be surprised by deceit or trickery (and this is prudence)."

As you are praying and thinking about what you need right now, perhaps as the Holy Spirit to guide you in the virtues.

QUESTIONS:

Which of these virtues do feel you need most right now?

Who are some people who you admire for their prudence, justice, fortitude, or temperance?



THOUGHTS...

FEBRUARY 2024



THOUGHTS...

THEME

What is God's Plan for me?



REFLECTION QUESTION

What can I do to support my faith community, my family, and my peers in their faith?



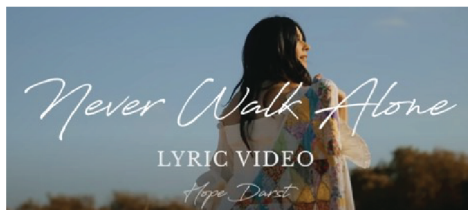
SCRIPTURE **Isaiah 6:8**

"Here I am. Send me!"



SONG FOR REFLECTION

Hope Darst - Never Walk Alone (Official Lyric Video)



What Does Pope Francis Have to Say to Young People?

Pope Francis wrote a letter to young people called "Christus Vivit" (Christ is Alive!). This section is one of his challenges to young people who are called to be today's heroes for the Church.

175. Filled with the love of Christ, young people are called to be witnesses of the Gospel wherever they find themselves, by the way they live. Saint Alberto Hurtado once said that "being an apostle does not mean wearing a lapel pin; it is not about speaking about the truth but living it, embodying it, being transformed in Christ. Being an apostle does not mean carrying a torch in hand, possessing the light, but being that light... The Gospel, more than a lesson, is an example. A message that becomes a life fully lived".

176. The importance of witness does not mean that we should be silent about the word. Why should we not speak of Jesus, why should we not tell others that he gives us strength in life, that we enjoy talking with him, that we benefit from meditating on his words? Young people, do not let the world draw you only into things that are wrong and superficial. Learn to swim against the tide, learn how to share Jesus and the faith he has given you. May you be moved by that same irresistible impulse that led Saint Paul to say: "Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:16)!

177. "Where does Jesus send us? There are no borders, no limits: he sends us everywhere. The Gospel is for everyone, not just for some. It is not only for those who seem closer to us, more receptive, more welcoming. It is for everyone. Do not be afraid to go and bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away and most indifferent. The Lord seeks all; he wants everyone to feel the warmth of his mercy and his love". He invites us to be fearless missionaries wherever we are and in whatever company we find ourselves: in our neighborhoods, in school or sports or social life, in volunteer service or in the workplace. Wherever we are, we always have an opportunity to share the joy of the Gospel. That is how the Lord goes out to meet everyone. He loves you, dear young people, for you are the means by which he can spread his light and hope. He is counting on your courage, your boldness and your enthusiasm.

178. Don't think that this mission is soft and easy. Some young people have given their lives for the sake of missionary outreach. As the Korean bishops put it: "we hope that we can be grains of wheat and instruments for the salvation of humanity, following upon the example of the martyrs. Though our faith is as small as a mustard seed, God will give it growth and use it as an instrument for his work of salvation". Young friends, don't wait until tomorrow to contribute your energy, your audacity and your creativity to changing our world. Your youth is not an "in-between time". You are the now of God, and he wants you to bear fruit. For "it is in giving that we receive". The best way to prepare a bright future is to experience the present as best we can, with commitment and generosity.