

First Week:

The Challenge to Pray for Peace

Scripture

John 20: 19-31: "Peace be with you."

Symbol

Votive candle

Reflection

Imagine the joy when the disciples saw Jesus for the first time after he rose from the dead. The experience must have been unbelievable, and with his words, he brought peace into their lives again. Poor Thomas. Not only was he not in the right place at the right time, he let doubt take over his faith.

Your challenge this week

Look for opportunities to bring the peace of Christ to others. Light your candle and pray for peace in our nation and world.

Journal Questions

1. How can you work for peace at home, school and with your friends?
2. What are some doubts you are struggling with right now? Turn them over to God in prayer.

More Connections

From the newspaper, clip articles about violence or war at home and abroad and pray for those in harm's way.

Second Week: The Challenge of Finding Jesus

Scripture

Luke 24:13-35: "And they saw him in the breaking of the Bread."

Symbol

A small roll

Reflection

They went for a walk and were walking and talking about the incredible events in the last week when a stranger drew near and asked them what was going on. They shared their story and the stranger shared Scripture. They asked him to stay awhile and when he broke bread with them, they discovered Jesus in their midst.

Your challenge this week

Take a walk and talk with Jesus in prayer. Tell him what is going on in your life. Next time you go to Mass, pray to truly experience Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

Journal Questions

1. How is Jesus revealed to you in the people you meet on the road of life?

2. How does receiving Jesus in the Eucharist strengthen your relationship with him?

Alternative

Share your roll with someone and also share what you learned from this Scripture passage.

Third Week: The Challenge to Follow

Scripture

John 10:1-10 or 11-18 or 27-30: Jesus, the Good Shepherd

Symbol

Shepherd's staff

Reflection

Jesus tells us he will be there for us, our shepherd to guide us and take care of us. But we are not just a bunch of anonymous sheep in a big flock. Our shepherd knows each one of us – and died for each one of us. But it isn't easy to listen to his voice. There is so much noise around. It isn't easy to follow where he leads. There are too many distractions around.

Your challenge this week

In a world that tells us to be #1 and rewards us for being in charge, it is often hard to be a follower. Your challenge is to follow the leader. Learn to follow, do not be first; for once let someone else get his or her way. Let go and let God.

Journal Questions

1. What can you do to better listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd?
2. How can you help Jesus take care of the sheep in the flock?

Alternative

Pick a national or world leader. List their leadership qualities. List Jesus' leadership qualities. How is Jesus a leader in a very different way?

Fourth Week:

The Challenge to NOT get out of the way

Scripture

John 14:1-12: "I am the way and the truth and the life."

Symbol

Piece of a road map or a compass

Reflection

Where are you going? Sometimes we wish God would give us a road map and mark all the turns and detours. It isn't easy following Jesus, there are so many things that tempt us to follow dead end roads. Yet, we are not lost without a GPS system. Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

Your challenge this week

What do you need to change in your life to make way for Jesus? Make a sign that says, "Jesus is the Way," and hang it somewhere where you will see it every day.

Journal Questions

1. Where do you need direction in your life right now?
2. What are some of the roadblocks to following the ways of Jesus?

Alternative

Consider how a compass helps a hiker or traveler find their way. How are the Scriptures a compass to our faith?

Fifth Week: The Challenge to Stay Connected

Scripture

John 15: 1-8: "Jesus is the vine."

Symbol

A piece of vine or a small vine plant

Reflection

A plant needs water and earth and sun to grow. Without these things, it withers and dies. Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. We need to stay close to Jesus, to be nourished by Jesus so we can grow into the people we are meant to be.

Your challenge this week

Take your vine home and root it and plant it. Plant it in good soil. Put it in a sunny spot and don't forget to water it. As you care for your plant, reflect on the many blessings God has given you and ask for courage to branch out in faith.

Journal Questions

1. How can you stay connected to Jesus?
2. How can you stay connected to the church community?

Alternative

Use the vine and branches scripture passage as a model for planning outreach in your group. How is your service to others rooted in your faith in Christ?

Sixth Week:

The Challenge to Love As Jesus Loves

Scripture

John 15: 9-17: "Love One Another"

Symbol

A heart

Reflection

Today's Gospel is a love letter from God. Jesus isn't speaking to underlings or servants. We have been chosen by God. Jesus loved us so much that he laid down his life for his friends. Jesus gives us a new commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you." The love of God cannot be contained. It must be shared.

Your challenge this week

Carry your felt heart in your pocket through each day. Let it remind you to look for ways to "love one another." Make a special effort to consider those who sometimes seem unlovable to you.

Journal Questions

1. How does it make you feel when Jesus says, "I call you friends?"
2. Why is it hard sometimes to love as Jesus asks us to love?

Alternative

Search through the Gospels for other Scripture passages that show the love of Jesus for us. Share one of those passages with a loved one.

Seventh Week:

The Challenge to Live in the Spirit

Scripture

John 14:15-21

Symbol

Small dove

Reflection

The disciples can't believe it. Jesus says he is leaving again. He just came back to them and they are already feeling like orphans again. But they won't be alone. Jesus makes an amazing promise. Through the Father, he assures them he will send the Holy Spirit to dwell in them

Your challenge this week

What does it mean to do something with spirit, to put spirit into all you do? Find a quiet spot, put on some soft music and invite the Spirit – in prayer – to guide you through the decisions facing you in life right now.

Journal Questions

1. What does it mean to live in the Spirit?
2. Choose one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit – wisdom, understanding, knowledge, courage, right judgment, reverence, wonder and awe. How do you need this gift in your life right now?

Alternative

Find a quiet spot and pray this mantra prayer: “Holy Spirit, come to us.”