

# Small Groups Curriculum

## Week of April 4, 2021

### **OPENING PRAYER**

Shine in our hearts, O Master Who loves mankind, the pure light of Your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our mind that we may comprehend the proclamations of Your Gospels. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments so that, having trampled down all carnal desires, we may lead a spiritual life, both thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the illumination of our souls and bodies, and to You we offer up glory, together with Your Father, Who is without beginning, and Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Prayer Before the Reading of the Gospel  
Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom

### **THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS**

For Sunday of the Holy Cross

#### **SUNDAY EPISTLE**

**St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:1-6**

#### **SUNDAY GOSPEL**

**The Gospel According to Mark 8:34-38; 9:1**

All readings are available at [goarch.org](http://goarch.org) or the Daily Readings app.

## **EPISTLE READING**

Brethren, since we have a high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people.

And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt Himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by Him who said to Him, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee"; as He says also in another place, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek."

## **GOSPEL READING**

The Lord said: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

"For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what can a man give in return for his life? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."

# Discussion

## INTRO NOTES

### 1. The Strength of God

- A. In the Gospel, Jesus says that "if anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me"
  - i. Yet the purpose of a cross is not merely to be carried, but to be crucified upon
  - ii. There is nothing more helpless than crucifixion: being nailed to a cross, powerless to move
- B. In the Epistle, Saint Paul frames things in terms of God's strength and our weakness
  - i. "We have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses..."
- C. The Holy Cross is a reminder to depend on the strength of God, not our own imagined strength

### 2. God is the Source of All Good Things

- A. Saint Paul reminds us to reach out to the Lord for help
  - i. "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need"
  - ii. Despite everything he endured in his life, Saint Paul never claimed credit for himself
- B. In the Gospel, Jesus tells us that our best efforts will not bear the intended fruit
  - i. "For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it"
  - ii. Living life on our own terms, and for our own glory, will get us nowhere
- C. God is the source of all good things in our lives, and apart from Him we can do nothing

### 3. Transformed by God

- A. Jesus anticipated the glory that will be fully revealed on the Last Day
  - i. "When He comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels"
  - ii. This is also the glory that waits for His followers, who will "save their lives" in their union with the Lord

# Discussion

- B. Similarly, Saint Paul points to the glory of Christ, who is no mere man
  - i. “We have a high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God...”
  - ii. We, His disciples, can follow Him into the heavens
- C. We can be transformed in our weakness by the strength and grace of God

For more on this Sunday’s Gospel reading, watch:  
[Live the Word #25 | How to Carry Your Cross](#)

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How are you feeling right now?
2. Which part of the Lenten journey has made you most aware of your need for God’s help?
3. In the epistle reading, Paul tells us that our High Priest, Jesus, is capable of sympathizing with our weakness. How does this reality help you feel emboldened to dive even further into the Lenten journey as Christ reveals His closeness to you, not despite your weakness, but through it? How have you thanked God for His closeness to you amidst your need for Him?
4. Are there any ways you feel your life has already been transformed by God? How do you find that your need for transformation has been opened to you through your Lenten journey?

If you don’t get through all the questions, that’s ok!

# Discussion

## **WRAP-UP NOTES**

Each Wrap-Up should be personal and based on your time together as a Small Group. These three questions can help you, as a Small Group Leader, wrap up your weekly meeting:

1. What are you grateful to have learned or heard in the conversation?
2. What simple statement or question from the conversation can you share again that would be most helpful to hear again three years from now?
3. If you could share up to twelve words on the topic of “bearing your cross” what would you say?

## **AT THE END OF MEETINGS**

We give thanks to You, invisible King, Who by Your boundless power fashioned the universe, and in the multitude of Your mercy brought all things from nothing into being. Look down from heaven, O Master, upon those who have bowed their heads before You; for they have not bowed before flesh and blood, but before You, the awesome God. Therefore, O Master, make smooth and beneficial for us all, whatever lies ahead, according to the need of each: Sail with those who sail; travel with those who travel; heal the sick, Physician of our souls and bodies. Through the grace, compassion, and love for mankind of Your only-begotten Son, with whom You are blessed, together with Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Prayer Following the Lord's Prayer  
Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom