

GUIDE

Faith Sharing: Conversation That Transforms Us

Each issue of *SUNDAY BY SUNDAY* engages adults in the work of interpreting the gospel for their individual lives and for the upbuilding of the human community. In its four pages, *SUNDAY BY SUNDAY* begins a conversation among adults that can only be completed as we act lovingly and justly where each of us lives.

SUNDAY BY SUNDAY asks adults to become companions on a faith journey together, to nourish each other through faith sharing, scripture reflection, and prayer. In the give and take of conversation, we witness how God acts in our lives, we remember Jesus' story, and we glimpse ways to transform ourselves, our homes, our workplaces, our parishes, and our human future together.

SUNDAY BY SUNDAY reflects on scripture by following the lectionary, the Church's book of scripture readings organized for reading aloud at worship. The Sunday lectionary selects from the 72 books of the bible the scripture passages for the Sundays of the liturgical year.

This year we read from Matthew's gospel in the autumn and begin Mark's gospel in Advent. The first readings, usually from the Old Testament, are chosen to fit in with the gospel theme. *SUNDAY BY SUNDAY* often uses a portion of the second reading for opening or closing prayer.

Welcome to *SUNDAY BY SUNDAY*, published by the Sisters of St. Joseph in St. Paul, Minnesota. The Holy Spirit is with you as you open your hearts to Jesus' story.

When we gather to share our faith and study the scriptures, we are gathering together as church. Jesus has promised to be with us whenever two or more gather in his name. *SUNDAY BY SUNDAY* will help you keep faith and build community.



1 Pray Each issue of *SUNDAY BY SUNDAY* begins and ends with prayer and often with a simple ritual. Praying together at the beginning of the session invites participants into the gospel theme of the Sunday. Sharing petitions and commitments at the close sharpens each person's awareness of the network that makes community.

2 Share Life Experience The cover introduces the gospel issue or theme and invites group members to bring their life experience into the gospel conversation. People have holy and amazing spiritual experiences in their daily lives that can nourish the whole group. Have one person read the cover aloud or take turns reading paragraphs, then stop and talk about the question.

SUNDAY
by Sunday

EL

Commandment?

US 2: The second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments rest the whole law and the prophets.



radical break with Israel's past religious traditions. When Matthew writes in the A.D. 80s, this break intensifies the question—on what foundation do we build the future?

Jesus answers the question of what is basic with the verb *love*, a call into relationship and community. He quotes two commandments long on Israel's books, Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. Love must characterize our most fundamental relationship with God and all others.

What other verbs say "love" to you?
 What demonstrates love most convincingly to you?

There is no one commandment that identifies three dimensions of the human person—heart, spirit, and mind. The commandment recognizes that each human person must size up what holds the world together and set his or her heart on what seems most secure. It calls us to set our hearts on nothing less than God.

In the word and the first commandment recognizes we are spiritual beings. There is more to each of us than any but the Ultimate Other can touch. We know that we exist, and we can't explain why. We can open or close ourselves to this mystery. We are conscious beings who find those who love continue to live within us when they are away yet we cannot fully communicate. The dead

live in our memories but we have to trust Jesus' promise about what lies beyond death. Lasting existence and relationships lie beyond our grasp but persist in our desires. Each human person has a capacity for relationship with others and with the Ultimate Other—God.

Lastly, the first commandment recognizes we humans have minds, so we can think about what really matters, envision what the world is about. The great commandment calls us to use our minds, to construct our best vision and farthest goal, to laugh at failure, remember success, to cry, sing, dance, praise, to start over and over.

Who sustains your spirit?
 Who and what nourishes your spirit?
 Who stimulates your head?

Jesus' second commandment makes explicit that love of God is inseparable from love of neighbor and love of self. The Ten Commandments have the same two divisions. The first three describe how to love



Habitat for Humanity Build

What commandments do you follow in your business or work team?
 How have you helped build community among your neighbors?

God and the other seven describe how to love neighbors. When people live the commandments, they create a community. They worship God and no other; they rest from enslaving work; they honor parents and respect others' marriages, property, reputations, and lives.

God's love is not an idea or an emotion but an imperative—a call to act. The great commandments recognize that acts of love weave us into community, just as selfish and violent acts fray the social fabric. The commandments are more than rules to keep and thereby gain heaven. The actions to which they call us are the hammer and nails of Christian community.

Social action has two feet:

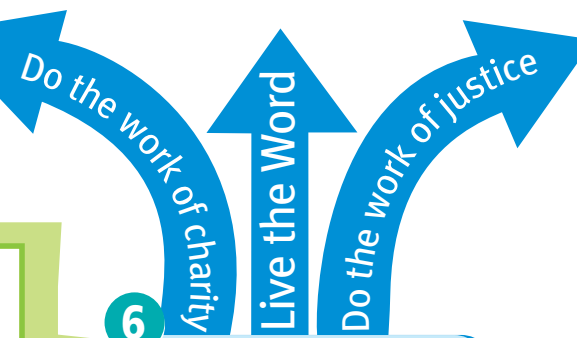
- Decide on three concrete ways that you can help build trust and love among the neighbors where you live.
- Make a commitment as a family to support one charity and learn all about it.
- ABISed: The Postville Raid: a 2011 documentary aims to help us see immigrants as neighbors rather than "others." Visit www.ABISed.com for background and photos.

3 Proclaim the Sunday Gospel. Page 2.

4 Dialog with the Gospel. Read pages 2 and 3.

5 Explore the First Reading Each weekly issues provides historical background on the first Sunday reading, the reading itself, and questions for reflection.

6 Pray and Make Commitments *Sunday by Sunday* provides a prayer framework for concluding a group's time together.



6 Share prayer to conclude.

At the time of their flight as aliens—the neighbor who is different, other, less, and dangerous, yet useful for physical work, Israel's law draws on that experience to teach new generations to treat aliens as if they were kin and to recognize that God hears the oppressed—the slave, the widow, the orphan, those at the bottom whose only hope is God.



St. Bridget's Catholic Church, Postville, helped organize a July 2011 interfaith walk in Decorah, Iowa, to emphasize the need for immigration reform, not 2008 packing plant raid. The majority still wear nurse bracelets that center their movements and they cannot work to support their families.

God is compassionate. "You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt. You shall not wrong any widow or orphan, if ever you wrong them and they cry out to me. I will surely hear their cry. My wrath will flare against you, and I will kill you with the sword; then your own wives will be as if you had murdered them. You shall not mistreat any orphan, by demanding interest. If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, for this cloak is the only covering of the person, what else has he or she to sleep in? If I hear she cries out to me, I will hear; for I am compassionate."

behind, exploited or violated call us to mend our society. At great risk immigrants ride trains north to a better life from Central America through Mexico to the United States. They find work in egg plants, meat packing, dairies; they settle down and have children—only to have raids split up families, deport fathers, and leave mothers confined with ankle bracelets and unable to work.

Many among us experience being powerless, without voice in decisions. Some of us get let go from work, marginalized, put aside as useless. Some of us experience exploitation, benefiting others without sufficient benefit to ourselves. Those left out, left

PRAY
 Decide together on a group commitment that calls you to action in your parish or neighborhood of that calls you to speak your own experience of oppression as a source of spiritual renewal.
PRAYER: God, you

5 Reflect on the Old Testament reading.

When or where have you had no voice in decisions?
 Who have you seen put aside as useless?
 Who have you seen exploited?
 To what work for justice do these experiences call you?

Charity and Justice

This feature suggests ways for groups and individuals to put faith into action. The works of charity—staffing food shelves, for instance—help provide for people's basic needs. The work of justice involves us in changing systems that have adverse effects on our neighbors in our city, country, world.

WHO LEADS? People can take turns leading and moving the group through the issue. A leader can ask which questions the group wants to engage. A group doesn't need to talk about every question.

