

2020-2021

SPiRIT Guide

Using SPiRIT is a transforming process that encourages teens to wrestle with what the Sunday gospels and Church tradition ask of them in their lives.

PASTORAL VISION

SPiRIT sows the Word of God in the good ground of teens' lives, where it can multiply a hundredfold in our world.

SPiRIT is a teaching tool for catechists and youth ministers.

Every issue invites young people into dialogue with the Sunday gospel and Catholic tradition—to question and imagine, to find words and speak for themselves, to share and pray.

SPiRIT makes faith sharing easy and worthwhile. Who will help teens do soul work if parish and school groups don't? Many families will—and who else?

If your teens are talking about everything but religion, SPiRIT



stories and articles can change that. They prime the pump for authentic God talk. They help teens value their own God moments and life questions, work through conflicts and doubts. *SPiRIT* stories spark the deep sharing that allows teens to know and trust one another and over time share their concerns.

SPiRIT issues call teens to put their faith into action—to live it!

SPiRIT initiates a habit of reflecting on the gospel that cycles the mystery of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection into teens' lives and over a lifetime transforms the Christian into Christ.

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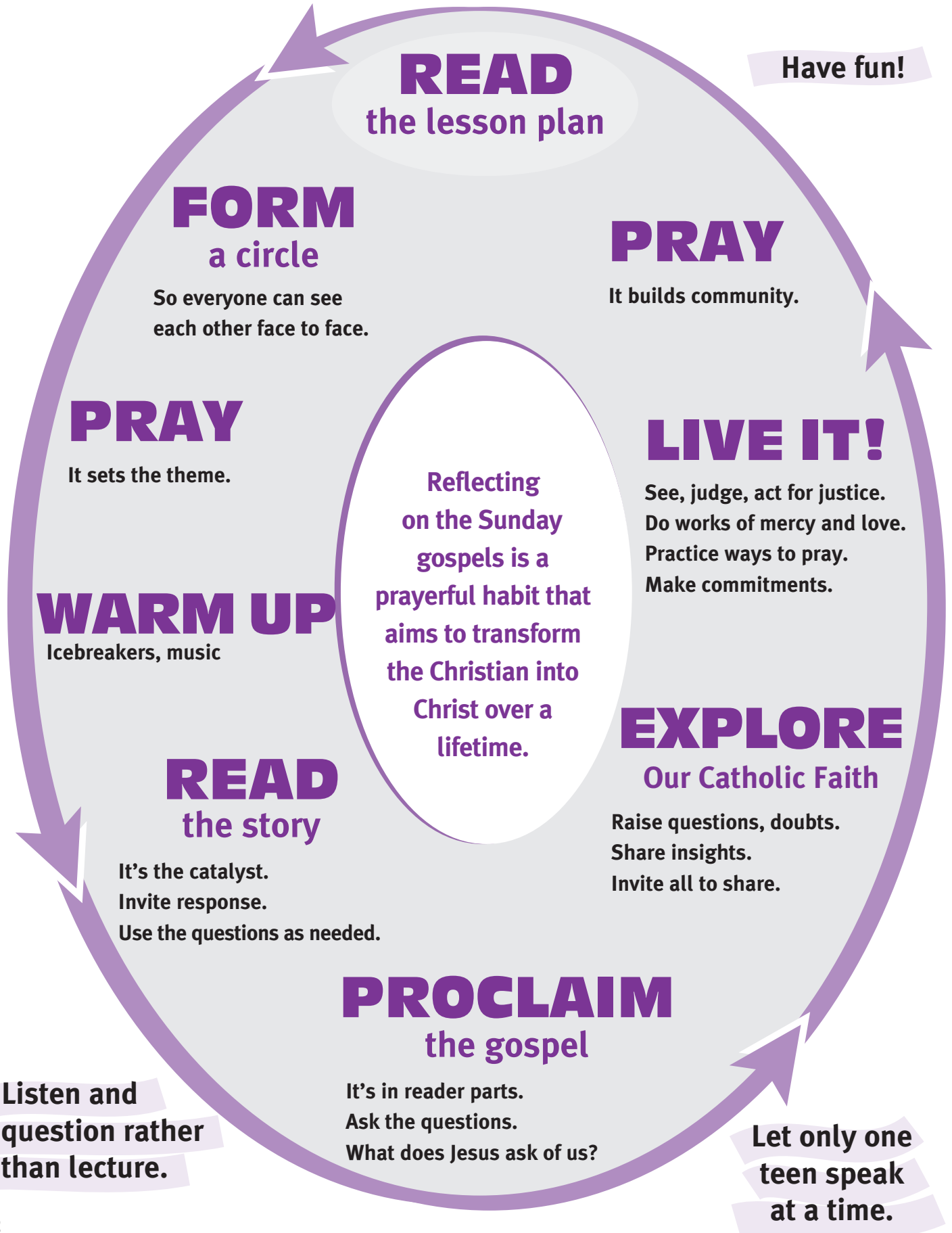
HOW SPiRIT WORKS

Each *SPiRIT* issue provides four pages written just for teens that include stories about life, the Sunday Gospel in reader parts, and presentations of Christian tradition.

- **Stories and interviews** anchor each session in teens' experience.
- **Questions** invite teens to interpret what the gospel asks of them.
- **Our Catholic Faith** helps teens explore Catholic tradition in their language.
- **Faith in Action!** activities challenge teens to put the gospel into action globally and locally in their schools, parishes, and neighborhoods.

Lesson plans inside ▶▶▶

Using SPIRIT Step by Step



How to Use a SPIRIT Issue

S*PIRIT* is a teen-friendly catechetical program that centers around the Sunday gospels of the liturgical year. This makes *SPIRIT* a lectionary-based program; the lectionary is the book that organizes the Church's reading of scripture into three yearly cycles.

The *SPIRIT* program provides 28 weekly issues that aim to instruct teens in the faith the Catholic Christian community lives. *SPIRIT* instructs through faith sharing,

through stories and questions that get teens talking to one another about their experience, values, and all the gospel asks of them in their lives. *SPIRIT* aims to build Christian community among teens through breaking open the Word, reflecting, and praying together.

Each *SPIRIT* issue has a one-page lesson plan that outlines a 60- to 90-minute session with teens. These lesson plans are the key to using every *SPIRIT* issue effectively.

Lessons are numbered and dated, so catechists can find the guide to the *SPIRIT* issue with ease.

Each *SPIRIT* session follows a three-step plan:

- 1 Sharing Life Stories
- 2 Reflecting on the Gospel
- 3 Living Our Catholic Faith.

SPIRIT's clear design makes preparing for sessions as quick and easy as reading through the issue and guide.

Step 1 Sharing Life Stories

Pray *SPIRIT* provides a prayer on its cover for each session. The prayer opens the theme of the gospel and lesson. Lesson plans suggest gathering your teens in a prayer circle and inviting them to bring any concern they have about people in their lives or events in the news into the prayer. Some teens may always keep these concerns in their hearts; some may welcome praying about them in the group.

Music A separate publication called *SPIRIT XTRA* suggests popular music to fit the theme of each weekly issue. *SPIRIT*'s music editor describes the theme of each song, provides key lyrics, and suggests questions that teens can discuss after listening to the song. As new music comes out, *SPIRIT* updates its music suggestions on its website: goodgroundpress.com.

Icebreakers *SPIRIT* lessons often provide easy and fun activities to help groups feel at ease and connect with themes in the issue. Some of these icebreakers are part of

the lesson plan. Many of them come from the *SPIRIT* book, *Icebreakers for Teen Groups*, which is available from Good Ground Press: 800-232-5533 or goodgroundpress.com.

A good icebreaker gives each group member a chance to speak, to hear his or her voice aloud talking about something non-threatening. Checklists, short games, remembering exercises, and preference questions invite participation rather than right answers. Icebreakers help groups bond in fun.

READ In every issue *SPIRIT* provides fiction, articles, or interviews by or about teens. These stories and articles provide teens a common medium for discussion and a catalyst for surfacing their own experiences. These stories are not an end in themselves but a means for teens to talk about their own issues.

Stories work like magic in helping young people explore their own experience. By struggling with the dilemmas of believable fiction or real-life characters, teens gain practice in

making their own moral judgments and expressing their own spiritual values.

Familiarize yourself with the story or article before the session. Always let teens respond freely to the piece when the group finishes reading it. Let their responses be a starting point for discussion.

Look over the questions in each issue. Make them your own, so you can work them into a session creatively. Look over the answer section in the guide to confirm what a question is getting at.

To read the stories, articles, or interviews, have teens take turns reading the piece aloud, breaking for a new reader at each large capital letter. Some stories lend themselves to silent reading. Some lesson plans suggest that teens read aloud to each other in small groups.

The purpose of the story or article is to provide the group a common starting point for surfacing experiences in teens' lives to which the gospel may speak.

Many adolescents have difficulty talking about themselves in any way or finding words for their feelings. Being able to talk about a story or interview can be a stepping stone to faith sharing in the group. Teens need to talk because they often feel isolated and alone; without talking they won't know others have similar feelings.

Building up the trust that will make teens comfortable talking about their real struggles takes time. It can take a year for them to realize you as a catechist or teacher will listen and help them think things through, not just put them down or tell them an easy right answer.

Questions *SPIRIT* questions invite teens to interpret the story. Make the questions your own, but don't be afraid to ask them as written. Ask your own questions, too, and invite teens to do the same. Don't have group members write answers out. That makes a faith-sharing group too much like school.

Step 2 Reflecting on the Gospel

Gospel *SPIRIT* puts the gospel in drama form to invite teens to step into conversation with Jesus and the other people in the stories. Putting the gospel in reader parts allows several teens to take an active part in proclaiming the gospel each week.

Be creative in proclaiming the gospel. Invite members of your group to create a gospel skit or do a contemporary version of the gospel situated in our time. If you have teen liturgies, have teens dramatize the gospel for these eucharistic celebrations.

Invite teens to respond to the gospel. Notice if someone has a question or an insight. Use the questions to interpret the gospel but not to limit faith sharing. If something in the gospel hits a chord, let the Spirit speak in the teens.

Questions Questions ask teens to interpret the gospel and challenge them to make links between the *SPIRIT* story or article, the gospel, and their lives. Talking about the gospel helps teens interpret it at their own level and explore its meaning for them in today's world.

The questions *SPIRIT* raises in no way exhaust the possible meanings of the gospel but are questions the editors think relevant to teens. Don't hesitate to go beyond these questions.

The aim of *SPIRIT* is conversion and transformation in Christ. The questions invite faith sharing—reflecting on one's own life experience. This is a transforming process. Teens and catechists open themselves to the possibility of Jesus and his teachings claiming their hearts, giving them direction, vision, and hope. A single insight may be enough to change a teen's life.

Step 3 Living Our Catholic Faith

Our Catholic Faith

Besides a story and the Sunday gospel, *SPIRIT* issues include each week a feature presenting Christian tradition—the doctrines of the *Apostles' Creed*, the sacraments, Christian moral life, ways to practice prayer. These features flow from the gospel. *SPIRIT* often supplies a short quotation from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to summarize a doctrinal concept. Teens can find the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* online and use the paragraph number to find further readings.

Faith in Action *SPIRIT* lessons lead teens toward action in their communities. The *Live It* activities especially call young people to do or act on the word Jesus speaks. *SPIRIT*

faith-sharing groups can become small Christian communities that reflect on and practice the gospel in an ongoing process.

Social Action *Live It* features often emphasize Catholic social teaching and concrete ways to do the work of both charity and justice. Social action takes both forms. The work of charity involves addressing immediate needs for basics, such as food, clothing, shelter, health care. The work of justice involves changing systems that leave people out or behind. Many of these references provide Internet sites that link teens to national and international groups working for human rights.

Concluding Prayer

The *SPIRIT* lesson plans provide prayer for the end of each session. In some cases, *SPIRIT* issues provide whole prayer services or directions for teens to create prayer services together. Lesson plans suggest that teens gather in a prayer circle. Catechists and teachers can follow the plan's suggestions for prayer or lead teens in making their own.

A catechist's or teacher's willingness to pray with teens gives powerful witness to the importance of God in our lives. It is a concrete way of sharing our deepest faith and of bonding together as a community. Do a simple prayer conclusion for every session.

Unit 1

27th to 33rd Sundays in Ordinary Time,
to the Feast of Christ the King
October 4, 2020—November 22, 2020
Vol. 33, Nos. 1-8

Called to Be the Body of Christ in Our World

The first eight *SPIRIT* issues form a unit that explores some of Jesus' most memorable parables about the kingdom of heaven. Jesus' parables invite us to see ourselves in the mirrors his stories hold up to us. These gospel passages come from Matthew 21-25, after Jesus enters Jerusalem, cleanses the temple, and proceeds to teach and heal the sick in the temple courtyards. The priests challenge his authority and other teachers test and debate with him. Jesus uses parables to draw them into seeing themselves.

As we hear the parables two millennia later at our Sunday worship, Jesus confronts us as Church, as the assembly of the people of God, and

asks us to judge how fruitful our stewardship of God's vineyard is, to decide whether we will attend the Messiah's wedding feast, and to assess whether we belong among the sheep or the goats at the last judgment.

All of Jesus' parables this fall address us as Church, as those who can be his hands, feet, and heart in our world. Jesus teaches us the great commandments and insists those who serve are greatest in his community. These parables and teachings and every eucharist call us to be the Body of Christ in our world.

Throughout 2020, the Church has read from the lectionary the Cycle-A scripture readings, which follow the

gospel of Matthew on the Sundays in Ordinary Time. The lectionary moves Jesus' death and resurrection, which come at the end of the gospel, to the middle of the liturgical year, when we celebrate Holy Week and Easter. After Easter we listen to the Sunday gospels as a post-Easter people, as the Church that gathers in Jesus' name to continue his mission.

Jesus' parable of final judgment gives Christians the works of mercy as our mission. We hear this gospel on the Feast of Christ the King, the last Sunday of the liturgical year. What we do for the least we do for Jesus.

Sundays/Seasons		Gospel/Theme	Teens' Lives	Catholic Faith, Practice
October 4, 2020 27th in Ordinary Time	Unit 1 Called to Be the Body of Christ in Our World.	Matthew 21.33-43 Tenants	Two views, making choices	Humans can choose
October 11, 2020 28th in Ordinary Time		Matthew 22.1-14 Wedding Feast	Welcoming immigrants as friends	Bible: Jesus teaches in parables
October 18, 2020 29th in Ordinary Time		Matthew 22.15-21 God and Caesar	A priest's adventures in justice	Catholic social teaching: obligations of citizens
October 25, 2020 30th in Ordinary Time		Matthew 22.34-40 Great Commandments	Honoring diversity	Christian Life: loving God and neighbor
November 1, 2020 Feast of All Saints		Matthew 5.1-12 Beatitudes	Struggling with illness	Church: the communion of saints
November 8, 2020 32nd in Ordinary Time		Matthew 25.1-13 Wise and Foolish	Prayer	Basics of Catholic social teaching:
November 15, 2020 33rd in Ordinary Time		Matthew 25.14-30, 19-21 What Does God Ask?	Recognizing talents	Christian Life: using talents
November 22, 2020 Feast of Christ the King		Matthew 25.31-46 Works of Mercy	Ending hunger	Catholic social teaching: charity and justice

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND

The whole of Matthew 22 reads like the editorial page of the *New York Times*, highlighting the most hotly-debated issues of Jesus' time—Gentiles, taxes, law, resurrection, Messiah. In Sunday's gospel, which comes from this chapter, Pharisees raise the question, "Which of the 613 laws of Torah is greatest?" Torah is the Jewish name for the first five books of Israel's scriptures, which are also called the Pentateuch.

Torah includes three versions of the ten commandments: Exodus 20.1-17, Deuteronomy 5.5-21, Leviticus 19.1-37. These commandments are apodictic law; that is, absolute statements, thou shalt and thou shalt not. Torah also contains collections of case law—legal precedents accumulated as people applied the absolute law in concrete situations at different times. Sunday's first reading is an example of case law—what to do in the case of holding a poor neighbor's cloak as a pledge of repayment.

The Pharisees who question Jesus want to sift through the accumulated 613 laws, resolve conflicts, and identify what's most important. In his response Jesus binds love of God, neighbor, and self irrevocably together. To love God one must love one's neighbor and self; to love one's self one must love God and neighbor. *SPIRIT* explores student actors' experience of performing *The Laramie Project*, a play about how people in Laramie, Wyoming, respond to the 1998 hate crime—the fatal beating of a 22-year-old gay man Matthew Shepard.

SHARING LIFE STORIES

Objective: The young people will recognize how love of God, neighbor, and self are inseparable.

Music: See *SPIRIT XTRA* for a song that fits the gospel theme.

Pray (cover) Invite your teens to bring to mind people and concerns they carry in their hearts and wish to pray for. Invite those who want to express these concerns. End by praying together the prayer on the *SPIRIT* cover, which sets forth the concern of this issue.

Checklists (page 3) Have your teens read and check all the boxes that express their actions and attitudes toward God, neighbor, and self. Hold discussion of their responses until later in the session.

Interview: Not Alone (pages 1-3) Read aloud to your group the sidebar on the cover, left, that recalls the facts surrounding Matthew Shepard's death and the origin of *The Laramie Project* and *The Laramie Project Epilogue*. More information: matthewshepard.org.

- Look with your teens at the cover photo. Actors portray people at Matthew Shepard's funeral. Read aloud the cutline about what is happening in the play.

- Have your teens take turns reading aloud the interview with the student actors and their directors.

- Discuss questions 1-3. *1. Putdowns of each other as gays or lesbians is extremely common in high schools. Encourage your teens to articulate hate rhetoric particular to their school. Help*

them articulate alternatives. 2. Teens have the brain power to see themselves the way others see them and to adapt. Ironically, teens tend to work on their identities by fitting in with groups. Differences carry special weight because they can signal one is in or out of a group. Developing a secure individual identity is the life task of the teen years, which enables one to take up the life task of the young adult years—intimacy. 3. The speech is powerful, response opened.

Checklists: How do I treat myself? God? Others? (page 3).

Have your teens do the three checklists individually. Then have them form small groups and discuss what connections they see among the three categories. For example, if I'm never happy with what I accomplish or with what God does to end evil, how am I likely to treat others.

REFLECTING ON THE GOSPEL

Objective: The young people will explore how love of self affects love of God and neighbor.

Which law is most basic? (page 3) Have four teens proclaim the gospel for your group. Discuss questions 4 -5. *4. Jesus inextricably binds love of self with love of God and neighbor. I treat others with the same respect and generosity I want for myself. Love of neighbor as one's self opens my boundaries to include others and grow; someone who is secure as a self is more able to appreciate diverse others. 5. We cannot build world community without valuing all people as God's creatures, without being secure in our selves, and without being open to people very different from ourselves.*

LIVING OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

Objective: The young people will discuss how to live out our obligation to God, neighbor, and self.

Our Catholic Faith: Loving God and neighbor (page 4) Have teens read the feature aloud to each other in groups of four.

Faith in Action (page 4) Respond to items 1-2. Share ideas as a large group.

- Ask teens to think of ways to meet people at school, church, and in their neighborhoods. Meeting people and building relationships allows us to feel more empathy and connection with them. Meeting others is an invaluable skill to build peace and practice justice.

- Invite people from the parish to share how they keep the golden rule.

- Discuss *Faith in Action* items 3-6. Ask for additional ideas. Encourage students to learn more at tolerance.org and bring their research to class.

- To summarize, read aloud the quotation from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, page 4. Read more on this topic by using the link to the whole Catechism online.

Concluding Prayer: Heavenly Creator, open our eyes to see our neighbor, our earth, and ourselves the way you see us.

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND

The beatitudes confound us: How can the poor or the sorrowing or the down and out or the persecuted be blessed? The beatitudes reverse what people in Jesus' time and in our time consider important. Jesus insists that in the world of God's blessings the marginalized have center stage, the lowly inherit, peacemakers are children of God and not traitors to the state. Jesus' beatitudes describe a world in which showing mercy, seeking God, taking insults, hungering for justice, grieving for loved ones bring God's blessings among us. The beatitudes have a jubilee perspective, a vision of wholeness that leaves no one out.

The beatitudes immerse us in mystery, especially the mystery of suffering and injustice. In the SPIRIT story "Big Brother" a younger brother learns courage from his older brother's battle with cancer.

SHARING LIFE STORIES

Objective: The young people recognize ways people live their faith and influence others.

Music: See *SPIRIT XTRA* for a song that fits the gospel theme.

Check In Ask your teens to describe briefly in a sentence or two one of the best things that has happened to them this week.

Prayer: Tree of Faith (cover) Have your group read over the prompts for reflection on the nine leaves of the tree. Explain the activity invites them to reflect on who their ancestors in faith are. Give them time to think and write names and notes on the leaves.

- Create an interactive dimension by having the young people form two circles of chairs or the floor. The inner circle faces the outer circle. Call out the statement on one of the leaves and invite teens facing each other to share. Give them a minute or a little more if the group needs it. Then have the inner circle rotate one person to the left. Call out a second statement and invite the new pairs to share their responses. Do all nine leaves.

Pray (cover) Gather your teens together and invite them to breathe in and out with you three times and bring to mind people in their lives or in the news who need healing or who need to be included in their school community. Pray together the prayer at top left, which draws teens into the healing focus of Sunday's gospel and this issue.

Story: Big Brother (pages 2-3) Have teens take turns reading this story aloud as a class. Young people in your group may have friends or family who have struggled with cancer whose stories they can tell in the group. Discuss questions 1-2. *1. Jason is competitive, strong, and athletic before cancer and chemo treatments weaken and age him, leaving him without hair and looking old. 2. He doesn't change in how he thinks Danny should be, insisting he keep pushing his basketball prowess. 3. Danny*

identifies with his brother and doesn't want to play and make headlines when his brother can't. 4. Jason teaches Danny not to stop competing because he can't. Danny learns from how Jason contends with cancer how to be truly courageous in real life, not just victorious in sports.

Reflecting on the Gospel

Objective: The young people will identify the values Jesus expresses in the beatitudes.

Gospel: Beatitude people bless us (page 3) Have five young people proclaim the Gospel—one to read the opening narrative part, and the others to read the beatitudes. Discuss question 5. *5. Help teens identify people they know whom these sayings describe. Poor people know what it is like to find used clothes and furniture, stretch food, and share what they have. Those sorrowing know the pain of losing people they love. The lowly know what it is like to be invisible and without voice. Those who show mercy, hunger for justice, and make peace do the work of mending breaks in the social fabric; they do God's work. The single-hearted and the persecuted have God as their center in how they live. Help your teens see they live the beatitudes among their peers, when they stand up for a geek who is being picked on or talk to kids invisible to most.*

LIVING OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

Objective: The young people will appreciate the saints as mentors in Christian living.

Our Catholic Faith: We Celebrate the Communion of Saints (page 4) Begin by reading aloud the quotation from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Identify the three groups that belong to the communion of saints—*pilgrims on earth, dead being purified, and blessed in heaven*. Read aloud the first four paragraphs to explain and define the communion of saints.

Faith in Action (page 4) Have your teens finish reading page 4 aloud in threes or fours and respond to items 1 and 2.

- Plan ahead to invite parish elders to come to your session or to visit your parish cemetery. Consider inviting elders next week to help teens learn about the faith of people who have gone before them in their parish.

Concluding Prayer Invite your teens to spend a quiet minute recalling an experience of holy communion with all that is (Item 5). Give your teens time to share their experience in pairs. Then pray the prayer on the *SPIRIT* cover again.

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND

Many early Christians expected Jesus to return in glory in their lifetimes. The Romans' destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, forty years after Jesus' death and resurrection, fueled people's expectations that the time had come. But by the A.D. 80s when Matthew wrote his gospel, most Christians no longer expected Jesus to return soon.

Sunday's gospel is a parable stamped with concern about how to live during the delay in Jesus' return. Ten young girls wait long into the night for a bridegroom who is delayed in coming. The wedding setting echoes an important biblical metaphor. Marriage symbolizes the relationship between God and the people of Israel and Jesus and the communities of his disciples.

Palestinian wedding customs made delays frequent because a bridegroom went to his bride's home where he had to settle bride prices before he could bring her back to his home and the feast. Sunday's parable asks us how we can best live faithfully in this elastic time between Jesus' first and second comings.

The Herodian lamps from Jesus' time fit in the hand and hold small amounts of oil. People used these lamps all the time and must have known they usually burned out overnight. Not to take extra oil is a dumb, practical mistake like running out of gas when one has seen the gauge near empty. In this issue SPIRIT explores the importance of prayer in our relationship with God.

SHARING LIFE STORIES

Objective: The teens will recognize the value of reflective prayer.

Ask your teens what the word *zeal* means—an *all-consuming, whole-hearted commitment*. Invite your teens to reflect quietly, identifying needs in our world for which they feel zeal. Invite any who wish to name these aloud. Pray together the prayer, top left.

Music: See *SPIRIT XTRA* for a song that fits the gospel theme.

When do I pray? (page 1-2) Have your group read the responses from students at St. Joseph Church in Bakersfield, California, to the question, "When do I pray?" Invite volunteers to respond briefly to the question from their own experience. *Stress that prayer isn't like a down payment on success but more a focusing of our whole person on what God asks of us. A prayer before a game doesn't guarantee a win but focuses our desire to play well and play fair. A prayer before a test may ask for a passing grade to substitute for a failure to study, but it can also call us to set new priorities so study gets more time. Prayer is basic to our relationships with God, each other, and ourselves. In prayer we are who we really are and want to be.*

Article: Soul Walk (page 1) Read this article on meditative walking aloud. Ask your teens to describe similar experiences. Discuss question 1. *No one automatically switches gears from busyness into reflection, give yourself the time and opportunity to make the transition. 2. Jogging integrates our body/mind/spirits. We experience ourselves being alive, attentive, grateful, one with the bigger world.*

Article: Zeal for Prayer Consumes Ignatius (page 2) Have two volunteers read the article on Ignatius Loyola aloud; the second reader starts at the first large capital A. Invite your teens to listen for what zeal means to Ignatius.

● Discuss questions 3-4. 3. *The long recovery gives Ignatius the time to pray. He refocuses his life from putting all his energy into success in soldiering to putting his life energies into continuing Jesus' mission.* 4. *Openended. Feelings, positive or negative, help us to know what we really value and believe. They can be guideposts pointing to the action we need to take.*

REFLECTING ON THE GOSPEL

Objective: The young people will consider Jesus' call to be a wise Christian.

Who is wise? Who is foolish? (page 3) Bring teens into a large group to read the gospel. The gospel has seven parts. Have several teens take the wise and foolish girl parts. Have teens proclaim or act out their parts in the gospel.

● Discuss questions 5-7. 5. *Openended. Examples—not studying for a test, staying up late before an important event the next day.* 6. *Light often represents knowledge and presence. The oil is the means to keeping the light burning. For Christians it represents prayer and reflection that keeps fueling our alertness and presence to God and the value of one another.* 7. *Openended. Reflecting on daily happenings can help us change for the better as we notice what gives us life and what we regret.*

LIVING OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

Objective: The young people will practice praying the examen.

Prayer Practice: Pray the Examen (page 3) Lead your group step-by-step through the practice of the examen. This prayer method has been used by many since the time of Ignatius as a way to come to see, over time, where God is present and working in their lives. Have pencils and paper ready for teens to reflect by writing. Have them choose either the most/least grateful question or one of the others to reflect on. Make this process solely a personal one.

Objective: The young people will examine key themes of Catholic social teaching.

Our Catholic Faith: Catholic Social Teaching (page 4) Have your teens work either in small groups or as a whole group. Read aloud this feature, which describes eight key principles of Catholic social teaching.

Faith in Action (page 4) Lead your teens in deciding if small groups want to work on any of the suggestions or if the whole group wants to focus on one issue and try to follow through on it during the year.

Concluding Prayer Invite teens into a circle to share their insights about prayer. Ask them to sit quietly and reflect for a couple of minutes about what or who stirs them to feel zeal, what or who takes their time and life energies. Pray the opening prayer together from page 1.