

PRAY

Read

Scene One from Sunday's gospel.

LEADER 1: I admit it. I'm a consumer who wants to look like everyone else.

ALL: Human beings cannot live by shopping alone.

LEADER 2: I am so bummed.

I'm going to have nachos with everything.

ALL: Human beings cannot live by eating alone.

LEADER 3: There's never anything to do. I guess I'll watch wrestling on TV.

ALL: Human beings cannot live by vegetating alone.

Read Scene Two from Sunday's gospel.

LEADER 1: I am the electronic brainiac, final answer and big winner; my e-goes!

ALL: God alone do we worship.

LEADER 2: I rule.

ALL: God alone do we worship.

LEADER 3: Show me what money can't buy.

ALL: God alone do we worship.

Read Scene Three from Sunday's gospel.

LEADER 1: Why should I believe in people who don't do what they say?

ALL: Remember we are human, and God loves us the way we are.

LEADER 2: Why should I believe in myself when no one else does?

ALL: Remember we are human, and God loves us the way we are.

LEADER 3: Why should I believe in God when there's so much evil in the world?

ALL: Remember God made us free and loves us the way we are.

Sign each other with ashes, saying:

EACH: God loves you the way you are.

March 9, 2025

Vol. 37, No. 22, 1st Sunday of Lent

SPiRIT



Beautiful CHARLOTTE

By Emily Carter

If I spent a third as much time with my books as I did wishing I looked like Charlotte, I would be Harvard bound, no question. The truth is I don't spend nearly enough time studying. I'll start to study and then I'll put on Spotify, and I'll dream about living in Paris, working for an International Relief Agency.

Before I know it my mother is calling from downstairs, "Serena, Sweetie? It's almost 11, don't you think you should get some sleep?" And I'll realize that I'm dead tired. Charlotte listens to music, too, but only for 45 minutes. It's on her daily plan. "Listen to music; space out: 9-9:45 P.M."

Charlotte and I are supposed to be on the same schedule, but I don't follow it as well as she does.

Charlotte and I are walking to class. I walk a little behind her, because she walks so fast. I trot along, looking at her tall, skinny legs in black jeans and wishing they were my legs, my black jeans. Charlotte is thin. Fashion. Model. Thin. She jogs every day, not just three times a week, like me. It's on her schedule. "6-7:00 A.M.: Run." That is what keeps her so skinny—not anorexia.

I know all about so-called Eating Disorders. We had a recovering anorexic girl come to our women's



5 to 10 million adolescent girls and women, and 1 million boys and men struggle with eating disorders and borderline conditions.

National Eating Association



Research suggests that about 1% of female adolescents have anorexia. That means that about one out of every 100 young women between 10 and 20 are starving themselves, sometimes to death.

health class. Afterwards, Charlotte leaned over to me and said, “Did you check out her thighs? Ka-boom, Ka-boom!” Charlotte is right. Everywhere there are people telling you to be mediocre with a Jell-O butt and a B+ average.

When Charlotte and I were in seventh grade, some of the girls got it into their heads to make fun of me for being short and not having anything on top yet. Charlotte told those girls that if they wanted to bother me, they might as well bother her, too. After that they left me alone. You understand? A friend is in your

corner. My mother, of course, doesn’t have a clue.

“I’m concerned about Charlotte,” she says. “I think you should talk to her, you’re her friend.”

“Concerned,” I say. “Can’t you just say worried? I don’t know, Mom, sometimes you sound so pretentious.”

I know I can be a brat, but lately everything my mom says drives me crazy. Besides, I can just see the look on Charlotte’s face if I tell her I am “concerned.” The “Et tu, Brutus” look. Besides, when she does eat, she eats healthy food. Spinach salad. Well, spinach. Raw with none of the dressing, full of fats and oils, that I can’t help sneaking onto my own salad in the lunch line.

How would my mother know anything about Charlotte anyway? Charlotte and I aren’t going to be like those airheads who bake brownies and sell them for the boys’ hockey

team. We’re not going to be nerds, either. We’re going to be smart, and beautiful, and successful. Charlotte is definitely going to be the valedictorian next year. She’s got it nailed. My mother should be grateful I’m not hanging out with druggies.

Charlotte is still beautiful, but I noticed today her skin is getting blotchy. It’s dry, with red patches. Also her hair seems greasy, which is weird, because she washes it twice a day. Today in the newspaper room I looked at her and for a moment she looked, well... ghoulish. Her complexion looked yellowish and her eyes were sunk deep into their sockets, and they seemed to burn. That’s just the fluorescent light, though; it makes everyone look scary. Besides, she was stressed. You try editing the *Badger*, getting it out a week before exams.

SUNDAY GOSPEL

1st Sunday of Lent

Jesus faces temptation.

SCENE ONE

NARRATOR: Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, where he was tempted by the devil. During that time Jesus ate nothing, and by the end, he was hungry.

DEVIL: If you are the Son of God, command this stone to turn into bread.

JESUS: Scripture has it, “Not on bread alone shall a person live.”

SCENE TWO

NARRATOR: Then the devil took Jesus up higher and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant.

DEVIL: I will give you the power of these kingdoms and their glory. The power has been given to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Bow down in worship before me, and all will be yours.

JESUS: Scripture has it, “You shall worship the Holy One, your God; God alone shall you serve.”

SCENE THREE

NARRATOR: Then the devil led Jesus to Jerusalem and set him on the parapet of the temple.

DEVIL: If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for Scripture has it, “God will bid angels to watch over you,” and “With their hands they will lift you up that you do not stumble upon a stone.”

JESUS: Scripture says, “You shall not put the Holy One, your God, to the test.”

NARRATOR: Having finished all this tempting, the devil left Jesus, to await another opportunity.

Last night Charlotte called at 10 after 10, which is unusual, since she always goes to bed right at ten. More unusual than that, she was crying.

“They don’t care,” she said. Meaning, of course, her parents.

“I’m getting straight A’s. Do they say good job? No, they say, ‘We think you should see someone.’”

“Charlotte,” I said, “Don’t worry about it. You’re fantastic. You’re working really hard. Besides, even I lose weight around exam time.”

Charlotte told me I was her best friend. She said when she had her company, she’d make me the chairperson. We cracked up about that. Manic & Panic, Inc., we’d call the company. But when I hung up the phone there were words in my head, and I didn’t know where they came from.

“If she’s your friend, why are you giving her such bad advice?”

“Shut up,” I said.

Charlotte and I are out for our Saturday morning jog. She’s talking about academic scholarships to Stanford or Columbia. I don’t mention the fact that her grades, unbelievably, have started to slip. She doesn’t have a lock on being valedictorian anymore.

I’m too busy looking at her sweatpants. I recognize them; they belong to Timmy, her little brother. He’s nine. I don’t mention it, though, and when Charlotte stops jogging before we’re finished,

and sits down hard, I don’t mention that either. I just wait for her to get up as if this happens so often there’s no need to comment.

I remember the night my mother came into my room. “Sweetie,” she touches my shoulder, “I’ve got some not so good news. Charlotte’s in the hospital. She collapsed earlier this evening.” My mother keeps her hand on my shoulder when I start to jump up.

“She’s O.K. They’re feeding her intravenously. In a day or two you can go see her.” Mom didn’t hug me when I started to cry. I hate hugs. She just sat down next to me and said, “I know. I know, sweetheart. I know.”

Beautiful Charlotte is lying in her hospital bed, tubes running into her nose and her arms. In a minute she’s going to wake up and see me standing here. What will I tell her?

“You’re my friend,” I’ll say. “I want you to live.”



The average American model is 5'11" and weighs 117 pounds.

The average American woman is 5'4" tall and weighs 168 pounds.

Most fashion models are thinner than 98% of American women.

4% or four out of 100 college-aged women have bulimia. About 50% of people who have been anorexic develop bulimia or bulimic patterns.

QUESTIONS

1 How does Serena see Charlotte? How does her mom see Charlotte? **2** What have you done when you notice a friend changing in a dangerous way? **3** Why are so many young people dissatisfied with their body image? What tempts teens to believe they are not good enough the way they are? **4** To what self-images does the devil tempt Jesus? **5** How does Jesus see himself? **6** Why does Jesus accept being human and refuse to act with superhuman power?

Which moral code should I follow?

The word moral refers to right and wrong, good and evil. What is the right thing to do? What is good?

These are basic moral questions. What makes a good person? What makes a good society?

Human beings have the capacity to choose. To be good we discern and freely choose what is good.

“Beautiful Charlotte” makes choices that harm her own body. Her choices lead to anorexia that threatens her life.

The devil in Sunday’s gospel story tempts Jesus to turn stones to bread, to show off his divine power, and use it to conquer the world. Jesus chooses instead to accept the limits of being human, to serve God, and live by God’s word.

Both Matthew and Luke collect Jesus’ moral codes into a sermon. In Matthew Jesus gives this teaching on a mountain. In Luke Jesus teaches on a plain. The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain both begin with beatitudes, sayings about who is happy and blessed in God’s eyes.

In both sermons Jesus asks his followers to respond nonviolently to injury and wrongdoing. Jesus teaches us to love our enemies, not just our friends. He calls us to be like God who lets the rain fall on the just and unjust.

Jesus’ code of nonviolence and love of enemies has at its heart a call to be healers of broken relationships, negotiators of painful conflicts, restorers of community. Turn the other cheek; give the person who wants my shirt my coat, go the extra mile.

Our compassionate, creative God sets the standard of goodness. Jesus calls us to be good as God is good.

The bible contains at least three moral codes besides Jesus’ challenge to love as God loves us and as he loves us. For example, in the Old Testament the moral code called talion states its basic principle, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”

Talion insists a punishment must be in proportion to the crime—an eye for an eye, not a life for an eye. Compensation or vengeance can equal, but not exceed, the crime. Find the law of talion in Leviticus 24.17-20.

The law of talion puts limits on the code of vengeance. By the code of vengeance, if a person kills another, avengers have the right to destroy the murderer’s whole family or village. This code escalates violence. Blood begets more blood.

Although this code comes from the distant past, child soldiers today report that their captors motivate them to avenge the violent deaths of their parents and families. Gangs often follow this code. On the other hand Batman responds to the murders of his parents by choosing to save people in his city from violence and crime.

The Old Testament also teaches the golden rule. This moral principle asks us to put ourselves in others’ shoes, to consider other people’s rights and feelings in how we conduct our lives. We measure how we treat others by the standard of how we want to be treated ourselves.



Each of these four codes holds up a principle of what is moral or good in people’s relationships with each other. Each code puts a wrongdoer and a wronged person into a different relationship. Each code expresses a different standard for what is good.

- Vengeance returns any amount of evil for an injury.
- Talion keeps the right to return an injury for an injury in proportion—a life for a life, an eye for an eye.
- The golden rule asks us to treat one another as equals.
- Jesus’ moral code calls for returning evil with good. The response of an injured person in this code is out of proportion. It aims to stop conflict and heal wounds.

FAITH in ACTION

- 1 Create a display of articles that illustrate people acting by each of the four moral codes.
- 2 Identify the moral code out of which you most habitually choose to act.
- 3 Practice responding nonviolently to insults or threats during Lent.