

First 15—

St. John Fisher Parish

Reflects on the

Coming Sunday Readings



Leader's Guide and Sample Questions for

July 2013 through June 2014

What is the “First 15”?

As a community, St. John Fisher Catholic Church strives to live out the call to Christian stewardship. We are committed to giving the first fruits of our lives to the Lord. The First 15 is an expression of our commitment to stewardship by giving the first 15 minutes of all meetings at St. John Fisher to prayer and reflection on the coming Sunday’s Reading. Many groups choose to use the Gospel but you are free to use the First or Second Reading, as well.

In the back of this booklet is the opening prayer used at these gatherings. In *italics* are directions to assist you in leading the prayer. Those words are not read.

New for 2013-2014 is the section “For What Shall We Pray?” After everyone has had the opportunity to share their thoughts and reflections on the reading, the leader will invite those present to ask those gathered to remember a person or situation in their prayers. Once everyone has had the chance to ask for prayers, the leader leads those gathered in an *Our Father*.

The prayer remains the same each week – only the reading and questions change. You can find the coming Sunday’s reading cited in the parish bulletin, as well as in this booklet. The annual resources, *At Home with the Word* and *Sunday Missal* contain the texts. They are also available from *iMissal* and other iPhone and Android applications.

You can also find them at the website for the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) (<http://www.usccb.org>). On the home page is a calendar. When you click on a particular date, you will be redirected to a page that contains the readings for that day.

How do I lead the “First 15”?

You will need:

- this booklet (The prayer format is on the inside back cover.)
- a New American Bible, or copy of the coming Sunday reading
- a volunteer to read the reading
- time to prepare to lead the First 15
- A template for making copies of the First 15 is also available as a separate file in MS Word.

You are welcome to use other questions than what is in this guide. You may compose your own, or check out these websites:

Our Sunday Visitor Curriculum:

http://www.osvcurriculum.com/lifelong_catechesis/index.html

Click on “Adults” icon and then “Question of the Week”

“Sunday Readings and Background”

may help you prepare to lead the First 15

Sadlier Gather in My Name:

<http://www.sadlierreligion.com/webelieve/gather.cfm>

Click on “Question of the Week” icon

RCL-Benziger:

<http://www.wholecommunitycatechesis.com/>

Click on “Questions of the Week” icon

Sunday Readings Online:

www.usccb.org

Ordinary Time

July 7, 2013—*Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Gospel: Luke 10:1-12, 17-20

At that time the Lord appointed seventy-two others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit.

Who are your companions on your journey as a disciple of Jesus? Where are you called to prepare the way for Jesus to come?

July 14, 2013—*Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Second Reading: Romans 8:26-27

The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groaning.

When have you experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit at a time of difficulty or weakness?

July 21, 2013—*Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Gospel: Luke 10:38-42

“Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.”

Jesus praised Mary’s choice to sit at his feet and listen to him. When and where this summer can you take time to sit and listen to God?

July 28, 2013—*Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Gospel: Luke 11:1-13

“And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

When has God answered your prayer? Was it the answer you *wanted* or the answer you *needed*?

August 4, 2013—*Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Second Reading: Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all in all.

Who do you struggle to see as Christ’s presence in your life?

August 11, 2013—*Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Gospel: Luke 12:32-48

For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

What is your heart’s desire? How is that connected to your relationship with Jesus?

August 18, 2013—*Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Second Reading: Hebrews 12:1-4

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith.

What saints inspire you in your spiritual journey? Can you imagine them cheering you on as you run the race of life? What about Jesus helps you to run your race?

August 25, 2013—*Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Gospel: Luke 13:22-30

“Strive to enter through the narrow gate...”

What helps you stay on the straight and narrow? Mass, Sacred Scripture, prayer, community? Something else?

September 1, 2013—Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

C. S. Lewis once said, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less.” Where in your life do you struggle to think of others before yourself?

September 8, 2013—Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel: Luke 14:25-33

“Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”

How does Jesus challenge you to take up your cross and follow him?

September 15, 2013—Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

“I am grateful to him who has strengthened me, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he considered me trustworthy in appointing me to the ministry.”

Jesus calls all of us, as he did Paul, into service in a particular way. Sometimes our ministry happens at church but often Jesus calls us to serve out in the world. How does Jesus call you into his service? How has he strengthened you for this task?

September 22, 2013—Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel: Luke 16:1-13

“No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other.”

What competes for my attention and pulls me away from following Jesus?

September 29, 2013—Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 6:11-16

“But you, man of God, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience and gentleness. Compete well for the faith.”

What helps you live as a disciple in this world as Paul describes it here?

October 6, 2013—Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 1:6-8; 13-14

So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, ...but bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God.

How do you testify to the Gospel in word and/or deed in your life? Where do you find God's strength for this mission?

October 13, 2013—Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel: Luke 17:11-19

And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him.

How do you thank God for the gifts you have received from him?

October 20, 2013—Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Exodus 17:8-13

When Moses grew weary, Aaron and Hur helped support him in his prayer.

Who helps support you in your relationship with God?

October 27, 2013—Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18

The Lord is a God of justice, who knows no favorites

This passage from Sirach reminds us that God hears the cry of those in need. How can you be God's emissary of justice in your everyday life?

November 3, 2013—*Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

In the Gospel, Zacchaeus went to great lengths to see Jesus. Through his encounter with Jesus, his life was transformed. How has Jesus called you to transformation?

November 10, 2013—*Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Second Reading: 2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5

May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the endurance of Christ.

How do you hear the voice of Jesus guiding your heart and your life?

November 17, 2013—*Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Second Reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

This reading reminds us we all are called to contribute to the building up of the community. What gifts or talents has God given you to help fulfill Christ's mission in our parish, your family, the wider community?

November 24, 2013—*Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe*

Gospel: Luke 23:35-43

What kind of king is Jesus? How does that challenge you as his disciple?

Advent/Christmas

December 1, 2013—*First Sunday of Advent*

Gospel: Matthew 24:37-44

How does not knowing when you will meet Jesus face to face challenge you to live your life?

December 8, 2013—*Second Sunday of Advent*

Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

Who is your "John the Baptist?" What are you being called to this Advent?

December 15, 2013—*Third Sunday of Advent*

Gospel: Luke 3:10-18

"Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.

Where do you see the miraculous deeds of God today?

December 22, 2013—*Fourth Sunday of Advent*

Gospel: Matthew 1:18-24

When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

Where do you find it hard to trust God in your life?

December 25, 2013—*Nativity of the Lord*

First Reading: Isaiah 9:1-6

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light...

What "light" has penetrated your "darkness"? How are you called to respond to this gift of light?

December 29, 2013—*Holy Family*

Gospel: Luke 2:41-52

And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know I must be in my Father's house?"

Describe a time you "missed Jesus" at Mass. What helps you connect with God when you are at church?

January 5, 2014—*Epiphany of the Lord*

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

...and having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

When has an encounter with Jesus sent you on another path?

Ordinary Time

January 12, 2014—*Baptism of the Lord*

First Reading: Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

...a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

In *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, we are reminded that as members of the Church, we are called to bring Christ's light to all nations. What gifts were you given at your baptism that allow you to participate in this mission?

January 19, 2014—*Second Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Gospel: John 1:29-34

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

Who helps you find Jesus in your everyday life? For whom are you a "John the Baptist"?

January 26, 2014—*Third Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.

How can we seek the unity Paul exhorts us to have as a community of faith?

February 2, 2014—*Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12a

Which of the Beatitudes do you find consoling? challenging?

February 9, 2014—*Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Gospel: Matthew 5:13-16

Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

Can you name a time when the Light of Christ shone through your actions? Can you name a missed opportunity?

What can you do to be more mindful of these opportunities in the future?

February 16, 2014—*Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Gospel: Matthew 5:17-37

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.

How does Jesus fulfill the law?

February 23, 2014—*Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Gospel: Matthew 5:38-48

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Where in my life does Jesus call me to this standard?

March 2, 2014—*Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

First Reading: Isaiah 49:14-15

Isaiah's words remind us that God never forsakes us. When in your life could these words bring consolation?

When could you share these words with others?

Lent

March 9, 2014—*First Sunday of Lent*

Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11

What are the hungers and distractions that draw your attention away from prayer and a relationship with God this Lent?

March 16, 2014—*Second Sunday of Lent*

Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9

“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”

To hear the voice of Jesus, we often need to make room in the noise of our lives. How can you make room this Lent to hear His voice?

March 23, 2014—*Third Sunday of Lent*

First Reading: Exodus 17:3-7

What do you thirst for in your life this Lent? What is the “water” you seek from God?

March 30, 2014—*Fourth Sunday of Lent*

Second Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14

How are you called to live as a child of the light of Christ?

April 6, 2014—*Fifth Sunday of Lent*

Second Reading: Romans 8:8-11

What difference does it make in your life to know that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

April 13, 2014—*Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion*

Second Reading: Philippians 2:6-11

“...he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

In your life, where are you called, in imitation of Christ, to set aside your personal wants and desires to follow Christ?

Easter

April 20, 2014—*Easter Sunday*

Gospel: John 20:1-9

In the gospel, the disciples see but do not yet understand. How have you grown in your understanding of the meaning of the Resurrection?

April 27, 2014—*Second Sunday of Easter/Divine Mercy Sunday*

Gospel: John 20:19-31

Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.

“It is by doubting that we come to investigate, and by investigating that we recognize the truth.”—Peter Abelard
Where has an experience of doubt brought you to a deeper understanding of your faith?

May 4, 2014—*Third Sunday of Easter*

Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

How does Jesus make himself known to you in your everyday life?

May 11, 2014—*Fourth Sunday of Easter*

Gospel: John 10:1-10

How do you hear the voice of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, in your everyday life?

May 18, 2014—*Fifth Sunday of Easter*

First Reading: Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7

Who are the “widows and orphans” of our community? How are you called to help them?

May 25, 2014—*Sixth Sunday of Easter*

Gospel: John 14:15-21

How do you know that the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, is with you in your everyday life?

June 1, 2014—*Ascension of the Lord*

Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...

“There are many ways to proclaim Christ, and not only with words. It is not only a matter of speaking or preaching or what is negatively considered “proselytizing.” Proclaiming Christ includes everything that we do, in word or in deed, to bear witness to our faith in him. We proclaim Christ by our way of life.”—Archbishop José Gomez, in a letter to the people of San Antonio
How does your life proclaim Christ?

June 8, 2014—*Pentecost*

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord;...

What gifts have you received from the Holy Spirit at your baptism? How do you use those gifts in service to Christ?

Ordinary Time

June 15, 2014— *Most Holy Trinity*

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

How does this challenge you to treat your brothers and sisters in Christ?

June 22, 2014— *Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ*

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

What does the gift of Christ's Body and Blood in the Eucharist mean for you? How are you called to respond to this gift?

June 29, 2014— *Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul*

Gospel: Matthew 16:13-19

How would you answer Jesus' question, "But who do you say that I am?"

FIRST 15—TUTORIAL

Adapted from How to Lead Faith Sharing, Bill Huebsch, Pastoralplanning.com, 2008.

Note:

1. A template for the First 15 is available separately as a Word Document. If you do not have one, please contact your staff liaison for an electronic copy.
2. Before the First 15 begins, the Leader selects a Reader to proclaim the Word of God.
3. The words in **red** are instructions, not to be read. The leader reads the black words that appear after “Leader:”

INVITATION TO PRAYER

Leader: Let us begin,
now, here in this place
with a moment of silence
to reflect,
to focus,
to be attentive to ourselves,
to one another,
and to the presence of Christ.

All: **May the Lord come and increase our faith.**

THE WORD OF GOD

Leader: Let us now welcome God's Word into our hearts.

Reader: *The Reader reads one of the readings for the coming Sunday.*

If it is the first or second reading, the reader begins with: “A reading from . . .” The chapter and verse numbers are not read. The reader concludes the reading with the words, “The Word of the Lord.”

If it is the Gospel, the reading begins with “A reading from the Holy Gospel according to . . .” The chapter and verse citation is not read. The reader concludes the reading with the words, “The Gospel of the Lord.”

The text may be read from a Bible, Lector Workbook, Sunday Missal or you may download it from www.usccb.org/bible and include it here.

QUESTION OF THE WEEK/FAITH SHARING—

After a period of silent reflection, all are given a chance to share their thoughts and insights on the Question of the Week. Wait 30 seconds or so, in case someone wants to begin—do not rush those who are reflecting on what they have heard.

If no one volunteers to share, be prepared to start the sharing with your own reflections.

No one has to share—some may prefer to pass on the opportunity. When the sharing is concluded, continue with “For What Shall We Pray?”

FOR WHAT SHALL WE PRAY?

At the conclusion of faith sharing, the prayer leader invites those present to ask for the group to pray for their personal intentions. The leader begins the process with words such as these:

Lord Jesus, we are called as your disciples to support one another. As we begin our prayer, we offer up to you the needs of those present, our parish and our world.

For what shall we pray?

After all have had a chance to offer their personal intentions, the leader, or another person present, may offer the parish intention, if there is one. The leader then invites all to close the prayer with the “Our Father”.

At the end of your meeting, close with the “Prayer of St. John Fisher Parish.”

PRAYER OF ST. JOHN FISHER PARISH

God, our Father,
in our deepest desire for union with you,
we gather as a Eucharistic People
to be nourished by your Word
and the Body and Blood of your Son.

All we are and all we have are from you.

As grateful stewards
we commit our gifts of time, talent, and treasure
to serve you and your people.

May our hearts be filled with your Holy Spirit
as we go forth to make disciples
by sharing the love of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.