

saint mary's press

TAKE TEN

daily bible reflections for teens

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INTRODUCTION

Take Ten: that's what you're doing in these *Daily Bible Reflections for Teens*—taking ten minutes to do something simple and important! *Take Ten* is easy to use. Just open it to any date; you'll see that the page for each day follows the same simple format. It always begins with a Bible passage. This is followed by a commentary that connects the passage with your own life. Next is either a brief prayer or an action to make the Scripture passage active in your life. Finally, a suggestion for something more to read from *The Catholic Youth Bible™* (CYB) is included, to help you go deeper into God's word today.

The Scripture passage is chosen from the Mass reading for the day, so that often it is the same one Catholic Christians all over the world are reading and listening to. Sometimes it is taken from the readings for a particular saint's feast day. You will be able to tell that from the title of the reflection. So, in a real sense, when you read the day's reflection, you are connecting with millions of people praying with the same Bible passage!

We suggest you use these reflections by first reading the Bible verse slowly and more than once, and then reflecting to see if a word or phrase jumps out at you or catches

your interest. Let yourself be still for a minute or two with whatever thoughts come to you. Just sit quietly and let them sink in before you read the reflection.

Then read the short commentary. This paragraph often explains the Scripture passage a bit, but most important, it suggests a meaning or an application for your life. We make a difference as Christ's disciples by the way we live each day, and the commentary focuses on that. Sometimes the commentary poses a question, other times a challenge for you to think about. You'll have your own ideas, too. Write down your reaction if you wish. The important thing is to try each day in some small way to live the way Christ wants you to.

Prayer is the way we stay in touch with our God. The reflection ends with a prayer suggestion related to the message of the day. The prayer suggestions are there to help you talk with God. Read them and see if they say what you want to say. They are really prayer starters; it is hoped that they will inspire you to sit quietly with your thoughts and talk to God about whatever comes to mind.

If you use this reflection book with the *CYB*, you can expand your reflection even more. The articles in the *CYB* offer other insights into many of the daily reflection themes. The "To go deeper" sections will direct you to those articles. Take time to check out the recommended reading.

Some of the ideas on the pages of *Take Ten* come from teenagers like you. You'll also have your own ideas as you take ten minutes a day to nurture your relationship with God—a habit that will enrich your spiritual life.

God Bless You

The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon
you, and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance
upon you, and give you peace.

(Numbers 6:24–26)

This blessing, which the Lord told Moses to give to God's people, is a wonderful way to start the year. The Lord is blessing you now and through the entire year, and the Lord will give you peace. Keeping this thought with you each morning will help you travel through the day and throughout the new year with confidence that you are not alone.

Dear Jesus, sometimes I forget that you want me to live a blessed life. Help me remember each day that staying close to you is the secret to life's blessings and peace.

- To go deeper: Read “God Bless You” near Numbers 6:22–27 in the *CYB*.

Who Is My Neighbor?

Those who say, “I love God,” and hate their brothers or sisters are liars. . . . The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

(1 John 4:20–21)

Who is our brother and who is our sister? The author of this letter is not talking just about our siblings or family members. Nor is this quotation just about people we like or who treat us well. It is about the people with whom we rub shoulders every day, the people we see on the news, those who live on other continents, and even people who wish us ill or harm us. We may not feel love for them, but we can at least not wish them harm, and we can pray for them as well as ask God to help us in our attitude and actions toward them.

Heavenly Father, help me to see others with your eyes. Let me see each person I meet today—even those I would normally turn away from—as my brother or my sister.

- To go deeper: Read “Understanding Love” near 1 John 4:7–21 in the CYB.

Childlike, Not Childish

See what love the Father has given us,
that we should be called children of
God; and that is what we are.

(1 John 3:1)

Imagine the most loving parent possible, someone who cares more for their son or daughter than for themselves and who will do anything for them. That is the kind of parent God is, a loving parent who created you and allowed Jesus to be killed for the salvation of the world. As one little boy said, “What a God!”

Although we are God’s children, that doesn’t mean we should act childish. We can be childish by always thinking of ourselves and praying only “gimme” prayers. Rather, we should be childlike. To be childlike is to feel awe and wonder. What is it about God, our loving parent, that is awesome to you?

In your own words, pray a prayer of gratitude and thanksgiving to the God who loves you so much and has given you so much.

► To go deeper: Read 1 John 2:29—3:24.

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

(Mark 6:34)

During his public life, Jesus was a teacher. He explained to all who would listen how much God loved them and how they should live their lives taking care of one another.

Elizabeth Ann Seton, an American woman, did much the same. She was concerned about her children's education, so she started a school in Baltimore. She grew to have a great concern for the education of poor children, and started an order of nuns dedicated to teaching poor children and doing other works of charity. This saint didn't work miracles or have visions in her lifetime. She did what each of us is to do: live as well as we can the life we've been given.

Loving God, I want to follow the example of Saint Elizabeth Seton and live this day the way you want me to. Let me remember that I also teach through my actions and the values that guide my life.

- To go deeper: Read "Stand Up and Be Counted!" near Amos 8:4–8 in the CYB.

Loving My Brother and My Sister

Whoever says, “I am in the light,” while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling.

(1 John 2:9–10)

The author of this letter reminds us that loving all God’s children is essential to living in the light of Christ. That makes this Scripture passage a real challenge! Some people are just not as lovable as others. You’ve probably come across someone like this: the person who tries too hard to be liked, the person who can never stay on topic, or someone whose personal hygiene leaves something to be desired. Love means looking beyond human weaknesses to find the goodness God has placed in every human heart. When we do, our own capacity for goodness grows.

Dear Jesus, you never said it would be easy to be your follower. It is easier to love people who are far away than some of those I am with in my daily life. I need your help to put this challenge into practice.

► To go deeper: Read 1 John 2:7–17.

Epiphany

On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

(Matthew 2:11)

The three kings traveled far to see Jesus. In your life Jesus comes to you wherever you are. The Magi offered him homage and treasures. The homage you offer Christ is in your own prayer life and especially in your participation in the Eucharist, where he comes to you in the form of bread and wine. The treasure you offer is the kind of life you lead, the example you give as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

O God of generous gifts to me, accept this day and all that I do as homage to you and to your Son.

- To go deeper: Read “Jesus Brought the Good News of Salvation to People of All Races” near Matthew 2:1–12 in the *CYB*.

On the Mountain

Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

(Mark 6:45–46)

Jesus prayed in many different ways. This is one of several times when we are told that he went off by himself to pray. We, too, pray in many different ways. One of those is the way Jesus prayed here. Your “mountain” might be your room or a park bench or a chapel. It is just someplace where you can spend a little time alone and quiet. What happens next? You talk with your friend Jesus. Just have a conversation, telling him what’s going on, what your concerns are, and what you need.

Dear Jesus, take me with you to the mountain and help me talk with God as you did. Then help me listen with an open heart.

- To go deeper: Read “The Making of a Prayer” near James 5:13 in the *CYB*.

Open Your Ears and Your Heart

“Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?”

(John 4:29)

This Samaritan woman, whom people looked down on, became a messenger of truth and wisdom. As a society we have come a long way in overcoming stereotypes and bigotry. Unfortunately, subtle forms of bigotry and discrimination still exist. This is especially true in regard to recent immigrants of other ethnic groups. But those peoples and their cultures will have something to teach us. Try to open your ears and your heart to those individuals today.

Holy Spirit, remind me during this day to listen to each person with the same respect and openness.

- To go deeper: Read “Stretch Me, Lord” near Acts of the Apostles 11:1–18 in the CYB.

Who, Me Preach?

That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

(Acts of the Apostles 10:37–38)

The Acts of the Apostles tells how the Apostles preached the message of Jesus to people who were not yet followers of Christ. Still today many people are not Jesus's followers. The late bishop John Sullivan often said that Jesus doesn't need to be here anymore to preach his message because he has us here to do it. Most of us think we're not preachers. Yet we really are—by the way we act and the way we treat others. As the old saying goes, "What you are shouts so loudly that I cannot hear what you say."

Who are the people in your school or community who do not fully know Jesus or his message? Try to think of some ways you might share Jesus with them through your words and actions.

► To go deeper: Read Saint Peter's speech in Acts 10:34–43.

God Listens to Our Needs

And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

(1 John 5:14)

For what do you pray? for things? for good grades? for understanding? for patience? for the ability to cope with a situation? for courage? Perhaps you pray at some time for each of those things and more! Notice the condition in the Scripture verse, “if we ask anything according to his will.” Sometimes the hardest part is figuring out what God’s will is for us. So though we probably shouldn’t expect God to step in and change a grade or get us a job, we can expect that the ways God answers our prayers—or doesn’t answer our prayers—will help us to know his will better.

Dear Lord, I'll keep praying for the things that I believe are your will for me. And in the ways you answer my prayers, help me to know your will more clearly.

- To go deeper: Pray “The Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi” near Ephesians 6:10–17 in the *CYB*.

God's Family

Honor everyone. Love the family of believers.

(1 Peter 2:17)

Who is my family? We can actually answer the question in more ways than one. We think first of our immediate family at home. Regardless of what it is like—one parent or two, one sibling or many—it is our family. You may also belong to other groups—close friends, teams—that feel like family to you. You also have your Church family. Catholics are never Catholic Christians alone. The Holy Spirit brings us together as a community, a family of believers. And just as in your biological family, you can be either a passive member or a contributing member.

Father of us all, thank you for the gift of the family of believers. Help me to notice others in my faith community. Help me to consider how I might be helpful to other members of that family.

- To go deeper: Read “Part of the Family” near 1 Peter 2:9–17 in the CYB.



Praise the Lord

Sing to God, sing praises to his name

.....
be exultant before him.

(Psalm 68:4)

One of the most important ways we honor people is by singing their praises. When we compliment people, several things happen. We share their goodness with others. We affirm them for who they are and what they do. And most important, we show that the quality or qualities they possess matter to us. God doesn't really need our praise. But *we* need to praise God. When we sing songs of praise and thanksgiving or participate in community prayer, we are saying that God's qualities are important for us. Just doing that helps us to be strong in those same qualities.

Give someone, especially someone who doesn't expect it, a compliment today. When you pray the Gloria at Mass, pay attention to the words of praise.

- To go deeper: Read "Black People Praise the Lord" near Psalm 68 in the *CYB*.

Have Faith!

“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

(Mark 5:34)

Faith is the hallmark of Jesus’s ministry. Many of his miracles are based on the faith of the people requesting his help. Today we are bombarded by advertisements competing for our belief. People tell us to “eat this food and lose weight,” “buy this car and be popular,” “wear these clothes and be liked.” Taking time to reflect on who we believe and what we believe is essential to healthy Christian spirituality. As Christians we are called to believe we are part of the Body of Christ and we share in the mission and ministry of Jesus. Our belief empowers us to try things that may seem impossible otherwise.

Holy Spirit, you show us how to believe and what to believe in. Sustain us now as we struggle to make a difference in the world under your guidance.

► To go deeper: Read about Jesus’s healings in Mark 5:21–43.



Big Trouble

“I am in great distress; let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great.”

(2 Samuel 24:14)

Sometimes we are “up to our neck in alligators.” Our troubles abound. Friends are mad. Parents don’t understand. We are so far behind at work or school that it seems hopeless. A significant relationship has ended. We feel abandoned. We don’t know where to turn. David felt the same way, as indicated by the story from 2 Samuel. However, David knew that no matter how difficult life seems, no matter how much we have messed up, God is merciful. God is always ready to forgive, to give us a fresh start, to assure us that life is worth living.

Dear Jesus, when life seems desperate, give me a new heart to begin again. Help me always to be aware of your love and support in my life.

- To go deeper: Read “The Lord Is My Rock” near 2 Samuel 22:1–4 in the CYB.

Repent! Change Your Heart!

So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent.

(Mark 6:12)

To repent means to have a change of heart. Repentance beckons us not to be headstrong. It challenges us to begin again with a “clean heart.” To be repentant, we need to look at what is important in our lives. What are our most cherished dreams? What relationships need attention?

Goals help us to follow through on our insights about repentance. Leaders often note that little is achieved without goals. Goals help us to succeed, to know where we are going. What goals do you wish to set so you can live with a clean heart?

Dear Jesus, you were always in touch with what your Father had in mind for you. Help me repent from my selfish ways so that I may see more clearly your direction in my life.

- To go deeper: Read “When the Good News Comes Calling” near Mark 6:6–13 in the CYB.

Dealing with the Death of a Friend

Herod himself had sent men who arrested John [the Baptist], bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias. . . . [Later] the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head.

(Mark 6:17,27)

When a friend dies because of a sickness, violence, or an accident, we are devastated. How could it happen? The person had so much to live for. It all seems so unfair. We are sad and angry. That's how the friends of John the Baptist felt.

Jesus was saddened by the death of John the Baptist. John was his cousin, his friend, his colleague in spreading the Good News. After John's death Jesus withdrew to a quiet place to have time for reflection (see Matthew 14:13). When we experience the loss of someone we love, it is good to take time alone to reflect on the meaning of the person's life and the person's impact on our life.

Holy Spirit, help me adjust to life without my good friend. Empower me to witness to the spirit and values by which my friend lived.

- To go deeper: Read "Growing Through Loss" near Lamentations, chapter 5 in the *CYB*.

Let Me Know Right from Wrong

“Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil.”

(1 Kings 3:9)

When God asked Solomon what he wanted as king, Solomon asked for understanding and the ability to know right from wrong. Today we continue to need those gifts. How great it would be if we could truly understand those who do not agree with us, those who avoid us, and those who try to manipulate us. Sometimes we are so influenced by our peers that we forget we know the difference between right and wrong. A wise leader understands with the heart and mind the difference between right and wrong, and acts to do the right thing, even when those actions are unpopular.

Heavenly Father, strengthen me to be able to both understand with my heart and act from my conscience so that I can continue to be your effective disciple.

- To go deeper: Read “God, Give Me Wisdom!” near 1 Kings 3:4–15 in the CYB.



Whom Shall I Send?

I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
“Whom shall I send, and who will go
for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send
me!”

(Isaiah 6:8)

God was looking for someone to send to his people to help them understand the faithfulness he expected from them. At first Isaiah was hesitant because he did not feel worthy of God's call, yet he ultimately responded by saying, “Send me.” God needs us to make his presence known to others. We are God's arms, legs, and mouth-piece.

Which of your friends needs to hear that God loves them and wants them to be happy? Which friends need encouragement to turn their lives around so that they can grow closer to God? Besides words, what actions need to be taken so people can see God's presence?

Dear Jesus, help me to be your voice. Give me words that others will understand, even if I don't use your name. Let my actions reflect my words as I try to help others know your love for them.

► To go deeper: Read the story of Isaiah's call in Isaiah 6:1–8.

Touch and Healing

They laid the sick in the marketplaces,
and begged him that they might touch
even the fringe of his cloak; and all
who touched it were healed.

(Mark 6:56)

Have you ever considered how you can share in Jesus's healing ministry? In almost all the stories of Jesus healing people, there is the element of touch. Though we might not have miraculous healing powers, through the gift of touch, we have some power to help make people whole. We give hugs when people are grieving to let them know they are not alone. We give a pat on the back to let people know we are with them and support them. Physical therapists massage sore muscles and loosen them up, enabling us to continue to play a game. We give "high fives" as a sign of affirmation and congratulations.

Holy Spirit, empower me to share in Jesus's healing ministry. Help me to be aware of when the gift of touch can bring healing into another person's life. Let me never misuse this great gift.

- To go deeper: Read "Those Thickheaded Disciples" near Mark 6:30–52 in the CYB.



Be Genuine!

“This people honors me with their
lips,
but their hearts are far from me.”
(Mark 7:6)

Jesus abhorred hypocrisy. He had little time for “fakes,” people who pretended to follow the law but who in their hearts were far from being faithful. Jesus was less concerned that people follow the law to the last detail than that they love with their hearts. Sometimes it is easy to go to church every Sunday and look like a Christian, but when it comes to treating people as we would like to be treated, we totally fail. Or we exhibit all the external signs of being a Christian, but do not reach out to others and care for them as Jesus calls us to do.

Dear Jesus, enable me to live with integrity, incorporating your values into my heart and making my life a genuine witness to your Good News.

- To go deeper: Read what Jesus has to say about holiness and integrity in Mark 7:14–23.