



Week Leading up to 1.10.21: Born Anew from Above

***{Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Let's Begin: Think about how the challenge went for the last session. What went well? What was difficult?

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: Mk 1:7-11

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Dear Jesus, You came into our world to unite us with the Father through the Holy Spirit. May we be models in faith as You are to us: obediently following the will of our Father and always pleasing Him. You have graciously allowed us to share in Your Divine Nature through baptism; we ask that You transform us to be more like You. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. When Jesus was baptized why do you think/feel the heavens were torn open and God the Father spoke these words: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased"? *{Hint: Jesus' Baptism highlights that the realm of God has broken into this world through His Son; to follow Him; He will show us the way.}*

YouTube Video: Bishop Barron on Being Born Again (12:38)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZ1pLyLdnhM&feature=youtu.be>

Reflection or Discussion Questions: (For more information on Baptism refer to the Additional Information section below.)

2. Bishop Barron spoke about how Nicodemus is not understanding Jesus and translated spiritual language into language of ordinary experience. Can you think of a time when you may have missed a spiritual message or translated it into language of ordinary experience? *{Hint: Eucharist at Mass might be an example.}*
3. What do you think/feel Bishop Barron means when he says grace builds on nature and transforms it?
4. In Baptism we are drawn into a new world and our nature is transformed through the Holy Spirit elevating the flesh. What does this mean to you?
5. Jesus can reorder our lives when we let Him move in. Can you share ways you have taken things of this world like wealth, pleasure, power, and honor and reordered them for God's purposes?
6. What do you think/feel are the consequences of not being Baptized or born anew in the Holy Spirit?
7. We cannot control the Holy Spirit, but Bishop Barron says we can cooperate with Him. Can you suggest ways you can cooperate with God's grace better to allow the Holy Spirit to transform you?

Session Challenges: {Choose one or all}

- Read these sections of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on Baptism (1214-1243, 1223-1228, 1263-1274).
- Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to share with you one way that you can better cooperate with him and take steps to schedule it into your calendar.
- Prayerfully consider if the Holy Spirit is nudging you to becoming a Leader or Assistant Leader for a new Emmaus Small Group. Register to attend the next ESG informational meeting this Sunday, January 10 at 12:30 p.m. by RSVPing to OLSESG1@gmail.com.
- If you know someone that hasn't been baptized yet, reach out to them and share what you learned about baptism in this ESG session. Consider sharing a personal story of how the Holy Spirit has affected your life.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) *Dear loving Father, You so freely have gifted us by allowing us to share in Your divinity through the sacrifice of Your Son, Jesus Christ. May we never take the gift of the Holy Spirit for granted and learn to cooperate more fully with Him. Amen.*

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: Is 42:1-4, 6-7 Sunday Reading 2: Acts 10:34-38

Additional information: CCC 1213-1284



Week Leading up to 1.17.21: Jesus Wants a Relationship with Us

***{Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Let's Begin: Think about how the challenge went for the last session. What went well? What was difficult?

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: **Jn 1:35-42**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Dear Jesus, You are calling us each by name to follow You. May we recognize You and willingly follow You as our teacher. Place a hunger on our hearts to know You in a deep and personal way. In Jesus Name. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. In this Gospel, do you think/feel that it is significant that John the Baptist refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God? *{hint: refer to <https://catholicexchange.com/242-wanting-right-thing-john-135-42/>}*

YouTube Video: Bishop Barron on Having a “Personal Relationship” with Jesus (12:38)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2KZDQSwF4&t=195s>

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. If you reflect on how you pray, would you say it's more often formal or informal?
3. Do you struggle with praying to God in an intimate way? Do you think the words you use to speak to God matter? Why or why not?
4. Bishop Barron explained in the video how Christianity is personal in comparison to other religions. Do you believe this to be true? If so, do you find it to be an important distinction?
5. Do you think/feel that taking a Bible study or spending more time reading Scripture would be helpful in knowing Christ in a more personal way? Why or Why not? Is there anything holding you back?
6. What things have helped you develop a more personal relationship with God? What are some things that could help you to draw closer to God?
7. Bishop Barron shares that evangelization is the introduction of someone into a relationship with Jesus. What do you think/feel about Bishop Barron's perspective on needing a personal relationship with God to effectively evangelize?

Session Challenges: {Choose one or all}

- Write a letter to Jesus telling Him what He means to you. Highlight who Jesus is to you at this point in your life. This is a great practice to do yearly and reflect on each Christmas or Lent.
- We can easily spend hours with a friend talking and listening. Increase the amount of time you spend with Jesus this week to build on your friendship with Him. Spend at least 5 minutes each day to share with Jesus what is on your heart and make a special effort to speak to Him as you would a friend. Take at least 5 minutes each day in silence and ask Jesus to share what is on His heart with you.
- Tell one other person what Jesus in your life means to you and invite them to join an Emmaus Small Group this Lent.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) *Dear Jesus, Your love for us is like the sun in the sky. It can seem so far away and untouchable. Yet You are always there, steady, ready to give us the light we need to see our path; yearning and longing for us to reach out to You. In our greatest desires, we hunger for the warmth and intimacy of Your friendship. We ask to enter Your light; to really know You and believe how dear and unique we are to You. Help us to identify and eliminate the barriers that block the warmth of Your love from our hearts. Our hearts wish only to walk in light with You as our true Savior, King, teacher and friend. We offer our praise and thanksgiving for Your invitation to know You! Thank You, Jesus. In Your Great Name. Amen.*

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: 1 Sm 3:3b-10, 19 Sunday Reading 2: 1 Cor 6:13c-15a, 17-20



Week Leading up to 1.24.21: Sharing the Gospel Story

***{Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Let's Begin: Think about how the challenge went for the last session. What went well? What was difficult?

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: **Mk 1:14-20**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Dear Jesus, You came to Galilee to proclaim the gospel of God. Just as the apostles immediately accepted Your invitation to follow You, we ask You to give us the courage to also abandon our nets and follow You. Through the Holy Spirit, infuse in us Your words so that we may share Your Good News with others. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. We hear in this gospel reading that Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God. Do you have an example of a time when you shared the message of Christ with another person?

YouTube Video: How to Live the Joy of the Gospel: Part 3 - Thomas Smith (5:08)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKIj76nG_6w

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. Have you ever thought of the Bible as your story too?
3. What do you think/feel makes a person a good story listener?
4. What do you think about using this approach to open a discussion? Have you ever asked someone to share their spiritual journey with you? If not, what holds you back?
5. What do you think is the difference between imposing vs. proposing?
6. Have you ever thought about why you are or are not Catholic? Do you feel you are ready with a response for the reason for your hope within?
7. Do you have other ideas of ways to learn the faith stories of others? Do you have suggestions on ways to propose your faith story?

Session Challenges: {Choose one or all} **Leaders: Please download the Listening Skills and Testimony Worksheet from the Leader Documents area and send to your group or handout if gathered in person.**

- Spend time in prayer and let God know that you are open and eager to listen to someone's spiritual journey and to make this person known to you.
- Watch the Part 4 video that is the follow up to the video we watched tonight: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1dTio6qOAg&t=105s>
- Take some time to think about your faith story. Review the Listening Skills and Testimony worksheet that your leader will give you and take some time to fill it out.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.)

Holy Spirit, we call on You to fill this space. Create in us a great desire to share Your message with others in our lives. Give us the courage and words we need to share our story and reason for hope. We ask that You shower us with the virtue of patience needed to plant seeds. Through the power of Jesus Christ we ask these things. Amen.

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Sunday Reading 2: 1 Cor 7:29-31



Week Leading up to 1.31.21: Spiritual War

***(Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.)**

Let's Begin: Think about how the challenge went for the last session. What went well? What was difficult?

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: Mk 1:21-28

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Dear Jesus, help us to recognize the unclean spirits in our lives. It is through Your name and Your power that we can be cleansed. We turn to You for healing and ask for Your continued protection. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. In this reading we hear about a man with unclean spirits and how Jesus freed the man of this evil spirit. Do you believe/feel that there is spiritual warfare still going on today?

YouTube Video: How the Devil Uses Your Gifts and Talents Against You – Fr. Mark-Mary (8:56)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhDHYpvEHNw&t=4s>

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. The video talks about how the devil is very tricky and can tempt us to use our talents improperly. Have you ever thought of this as a type of spiritual warfare? Does it change how you will view/address these temptations in the future?
3. Fr. Mark-Mary specifically shares how we can receive a new insight and then use it to look down on others. Have you ever done this or experienced it?
4. Have you ever felt that friends/family were watching you on your faith journey? How have you handled this?
5. Fr. Mark-Mary shares some things we can do to not succumb to evil temptations; 1) Being steeped in gratitude to God, 2) Share the gift and faith in Charity, and 3) Penance and Prayer. Which of these suggestions would you find most helpful? Can you think of others?
6. Can you think of specific ways to improve your gratitude?
7. How do you think/feel sharing the faith can help us to fight the temptations of the devil? Do you think/feel sharing the faith makes you more accountable? Why or Why not?

Session Challenges: {Choose one or all and print next page for handout to group members.}

- Memorizing Scripture can help us to train our minds against spiritual warfare. Memorize Romans 12:2 *“Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.”*
- Say the prayer daily to St. Michael the Archangel. Downloadable versions can be found here: <https://www.knightsoftheholyeucharist.com/saint-michael-prayer-download/>
- Read Ephesians 6:10-17 and every time this week you feel tempted by evil, make the sign of the cross over yourself and say, “Jesus, I need You.”

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) *Dear Lord, we thank You for the gifts and talents You have given us. We recognize the reality of being surrounded by evil. Help us to turn to You throughout each day and train our minds to focus completely on You when we are tempted. Through the power of Your name, Jesus Christ, we ask that You quench the flaming arrows of the evil one. It is through Your grace we will find the strength and peace we need to fight this battle. Amen*

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: Dt 18:15-20 Sunday Reading 2: 1 Cor 7:32-35

Session Challenges for 1.31.21: {Choose one or all}

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Week Leading up to 2.7.21: Jesus Heals and Helps Us Up

***{Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Let's Begin: Think about how the challenge went for the last session. What went well? What was difficult?

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: Mk 1:29-39

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Dear Lord, You desire to hold our hands and help us up from the darkness of sin. Inspire a real desire in us to create a well-formed conscious so that we may recognize those times we fail You and others. Shine light in those areas of our lives that need healing and give us the courage to confess our sinfulness to You. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. According to this reading what is the purpose Jesus came for?

YouTube Video: Shame Vs. Guilt – Their Meanings and How You can Heal – Fr. Schmitz (5:36)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLTE_7NVljY&feature=youtu.be

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. Do you think there is a perception that Catholics hold on to guilt? Why or why not?
3. Fr. Schmitz makes a distinction between guilt and shame. Do you think/feel it is important to understand the difference?
4. Fr. Schmitz indicated that at times we can have guilt due to an internal false standard of an objective. Have you ever felt guilty about something that you did not need to feel guilty about?
5. Do you think/feel that telling the truth can really release our guilt?
6. Shame is linked to our relationship with God and/or each other. Have you ever carried shame and had someone ease it or you eased someone else's shame?
7. Do you have any thoughts or ideas on what God calls us to do to help people that are feeling guilt/shame?

Session Challenges: {Choose one or all}

- Say this prayer daily.
Dear Lord, past mistakes and shortcomings can paralyze me in a sea of shame and guilt. Sometimes I feel like I cannot change. I ask for forgiveness for the times I don't forgive myself and ask that You give me the courage to confess my sins quickly. Jesus, give me the strength to do what seems impossible and to know how precious I am to You. Help me to remember Your promise of mercy and Your desire to grasp my hand and lift me up from the crashing waves. Bathe me in Your love and allow me to see myself through Your eyes. Amen.
- If you know of someone in your life that is holding onto guilt or shame, reach out to them and let them know how loved they are and that healing is possible.
- Take time to reflect on areas in your life that have guilt or shame tied to them. If you are Catholic, bring these areas to the Lord for healing in Reconciliation. If you are not Catholic, consider contacting a priest at OLS to discuss these areas of guilt in shame in your life and ask for healing from them.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.)

Dear Jesus, help us to recognize our brokenness and need for healing. May we always turn to You in prayer. May we willingly repent and confess our sinfulness and turn to You as our true healer. Amen

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: Jb 7:1-4, 6-7 Sunday Reading 2: 1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23



Week Leading up to 2.14.21: Calling out to Christ for Healing from our Woundedness

***{Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Let's Begin: Think about how the challenge went for the last session. What went well? What was difficult?

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: **Mk 1:40-45**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Dear Lord, we come to You today in need of healing. We are wounded and sinful. Heal us from turning inward and away from You. Like the leper, we cry out to You for healing. May we allow You to touch our wounds through honest and humble prayer. Like the leper, we appreciate Your desire to touch us in our sinfulness and heal us through the sacrament of reconciliation. In sincere gratitude and in Your loving name, Jesus. Amen

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. In the gospel we hear, "A leper came to Jesus and kneeling down begged him and said, 'If you wish, you can make me clean.'" What strikes you about this verse?

***Leader Note:** Please share with your group prior to sharing the video: In this video, Fr. Mike speaks about how family can bring the worst out in us and how we can grow from that. He is not talking about toxic families or indicating that we turn to unloving, manipulative people for greater insight to improve ourselves.

YouTube Video: Family brings out the worst in you (so God can heal it) Fr. Mike Schmitz (9:09)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhnHPkpthrg&feature=youtu.be>

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. What do you think/feel about the concept that real holiness or sinfulness is most evident with those we are closest to?
3. Do you find you are very selective of those you surround yourself with? What is good about this? What is not so good about this?
4. Do you have people in your life that challenge you or can be really honest with you? Or do you tend to distance yourself from these people?
5. Have you ever tried to hide a sin from yourself or others?
6. What do you think/feel about Fr. Schmitz's comment concerning God won't necessarily take away our sin when we surrender it to Him but He will do something with it?
7. Have you ever experienced turning to God and surrendering a specific sin to God? What happened?

Session Challenges: {Choose one or all}

- Jesus understands all wounds and wishes to hold you tenderly. Take time to ponder and pray about the wounds/sins you've been struggling with. Ask Him to bring about a pathway for healing and consider going to reconciliation.
- As Fr. Schmitz recommends – submit and become vulnerable by asking someone close to you, "What is one area you need me to grow in or improve upon?"
- As we enter Lent determine your Lenten sacrifices and how you wish to show your gratitude and love to God: through sacrifice, prayer, and the giving of money and/or time to others. Make an effort to attend Mass on Ash Wednesday.

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) *Let's take some time together tonight to contemplate how Jesus desires to heal us. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we ask the Holy Spirit to take from our hearts what cannot be expressed in words to You at this time. First, let's take a moment in silence to contemplate our sinfulness or woundedness – ...{wait 30-60 sec} We surrender the pain, hurt and resentment that we have from these things to You, dear Jesus. Let's now take a moment to imagine Jesus reaching His hand out to us with a great desire to help us through our suffering. {pause} Jesus, Your willingness to touch us in our sinfulness offers us great comfort...{wait 30-60 sec}. Dear Jesus, we humbly thank You for loving us so tenderly. May we turn to You throughout Lent in genuine love to connect to Your suffering, to help serve others and to share with You what is on our hearts. May we always look to You in gratitude and great wonder! Amen.*

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: Lv 13:1-2, 44-46 Sunday Reading 2: 1 Cor 10:31—11:1