

AWAKEN

Becoming Disciples of the Word

Sunday's

READINGS

Acts of the Apostles 1:15–17,
20a, 20c–26
1 John 4:11–16
John 17:11b–19

Scan the code to read
today's readings. 



Opening PRAYER

Lord, my God, I am so often confused by all of the voices that tell me what I need to be happy. Please send your Spirit to help me to hear your voice. You alone have the wisdom to direct my path. Amen.



Thoughts for REFLECTION

Reflect upon the distinction between these two thoughts: *God loves. God is Love.*

How do you discern the characteristics of God's love?

Awaken is written and edited by Jo Ann Paradise, D.Min.



What You NEED to KNOW

Scripture Background

Acts of the Apostles 1:15–17, 20a, 20c–26

This passage from Acts places us right into the first dilemma the Apostles faced after Jesus' Ascension. How do they replace Judas? A question we might ask is, "Why do they feel the need to replace Judas?" Numbers play a significant role in the lives of people of this time. They hold special meaning and are often symbolic. You may recall that the twelve tribes of Israel found their origin in the twelve sons of Judah. After leaving Egypt under the leadership of Moses, and upon their arrival in Canaan, Joshua parceled out a portion of the land to each tribe. Thus, the number 12 became the number that represented the identity of the people of Israel. What bound the tribes to God and to one another was the lived response to the covenant. The Apostles understood that Jesus was the New Covenant. They were the twelve chosen by Christ to announce that God's kingdom had come. There had to be twelve.

1 John 4:11–16

All the letters of John in the New Testament explain the depth of God's love. As he writes to

his community, he drives home how God loves each person and therefore how members of the Christian community should love God and one another. He wants them to understand that at the root of all that God does is his love. This epistle takes this one step further as John speaks those now famous three words, "God is love." Thousands of years later we are still trying to grasp the fullness of those words.

John 17:11b–19

At first glance, one might misinterpret this reading. You might conclude that while we live in this world, we should remove ourselves from it, as much as possible. To be a disciple means to isolate yourself and simply wait for eternal life. On the contrary, Jesus is instructing us to be discerning about the voices that we hear. Our trust must be placed in those who believe in the Father and have faith in Jesus, his Son. In the Old Testament the word used for Satan is the "deceiver." In this long address of Jesus to his Father, which takes place during the Last Supper, Jesus' prayer is that we may know the truth, that we might live fully in response to the truth that he has revealed to us.





Points to Ponder

What's Really True?

One of Saint Augustine's most quoted statements is "Our hearts are restless Lord, until they rest in you." Almost 1700 years after he wrote these words we continue to ponder their meaning. As science continues to unfold the workings of our biology, those words take on new meaning. Brain research has identified that our need for relationship, our need for balance, even the things we crave, are part of our DNA. The search for meaning and truth is truly a gift from God. We must partner with the Holy Spirit to discern (come to an understanding) of God's truth. This is challenging as the Holy Spirit's voice is not the only one we hear. The work of "the deceiver" is powerful yet subtle. Jesus cautions us to "Stay awake!" His gift of salvation assures us that because of our communion with him, we are capable of discerning the truth. And the Holy Spirit will provide us with the strength to act on it.

- What process do you use to make decisions?
- How does God's will factor into your process?



The Eucharist is the supreme proof of the love of Jesus. After this, there is nothing more but Heaven itself.

—Saint Peter Julian Eymard

Strengthen belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Visit the Pflaum Eucharist resources page.



Connecting **GOSPEL**

and CHURCH TEACHING

The Whole Truth

Are you familiar with this scene from police dramas? *A crime happens. The police begin to interview witnesses to get a description of the perpetrator. Every witness provides a different description. There may be a few common details, but nothing that provides the full and accurate picture.* How do we discover and who do we trust to give us the whole truth of our faith? The work of the Holy Spirit in our lives gives us a full and accurate picture of God's truth. *The Catechism of the*

Catholic Church, tells us, "By appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Holy Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (Magisterium)...receives...the faith..." (CCC, 93). The search for truth is a fundamental responsibility of every Christian, a search that all parents are called to inspire in their children.

➔ To learn more, refer to CCC, 93, 215–217 or go to Booklet 1, Session 4 in *Growing Faith*.



Closing PRAYER

You promised, O Lord, that you would give us grace that breaks our hearts of stone. I ask for that grace now. Instill in me the understanding that the restlessness I know can only find peace in you. Amen.

FAMILY CORNER

Scan here for parent resources. ➔



Question of the Week

How does Jesus protect you?



Family Prayer

Lord, help us to be worthy of all your promises. Teach us what you want us to do and how we should treat others. Amen.

Sunday's

READINGS

Amos 7:12–15
Ephesians 1:3–14
Mark 6:7–13

Scan the code to read today's readings. →



Opening PRAYER

Jesus, if I do not know you, I cannot trust you. Help me to respond each day to the urging of your Holy Spirit to grow in friendship with you. Amen.



Thoughts for REFLECTION

Today's readings focus on the need to speak, to proclaim, the Good News. What might you need to be comfortable speaking about your faith?

What might make you uncomfortable about proclaiming the Good News?

Awaken is written and edited by Jo Ann Paradise, D.Min.



What You NEED to KNOW

Scripture Background

Amos 7:12–15

Amos was a shepherd in Judah around 730 B.C. At this time, there was a division of the land that resulted in two kingdoms: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Amos prospered during the reigns of King Uzziah of Judah (the southern kingdom) and King Jeroboam II of Israel (northern kingdom). He was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore trees. He pruned stalks and protected the small fruit, eaten mostly by the poor, from insects. Amos travels to Bethel in the north to pay his tax to the priest at the shrine. The money was given to the king of Israel. Amos, who has been called by God to speak to his people, warns the Jews that they will suffer at the hands of foreigners if they do not repent and reform their lives. The priest scolds Amos and tells him to go home.

Ephesians 1:3–14

At the beginning of the Letter to the Ephesians, Saint Paul shares a blessing with the community. This form of blessing is found in the communal prayer of the Jewish people. We use the word *liturgical* to describe a communal prayer that is repetitively used in worship.

The Creed we recite during Mass is considered a liturgical prayer. When you read this part of Paul's letter you can almost hear, "We believe in God the Father almighty... We believe in the love he destined for us.... We believe that in him we have redemption...." In this poetic and beautiful letter, we are given a summary of God's plan and action in our lives through the ages. We call this plan and action salvation history.

Mark 6:7–13

In the first five chapters of Mark's Gospel, we heard Jesus teach about God's Kingdom and we saw his wondrous actions, the power of God's love, healing body and soul. Today, Jesus calls the Twelve and tells them it is their turn. Can you put yourself in their place? They are probably still overwhelmed at Jesus' ability to perform miracles and speak with such authority. Now Jesus is asking them to go two by two and do the same. My response would probably be, "You have to be kidding!" Add to that the next set of instructions: no extra clothing, no food or sack, and no money. By the way, many people won't believe what you say." You can almost hear Jesus' thoughts as he watches their faces, "How much do they trust me?"



Points to Ponder

Blessed by Blessing

Blessing someone or being blessed is a challenging concept. God blesses us. We bless God. We bless one another in God's name. Our understanding of blessing is connected to salvation history and so develops as we attempt to speak about God's relationship with creation. God creates with the desire for everything to live according to the nature he intended. This brings peace, fulfillment, and joy. Sin enters the world through our choices, and disorder follows. Yet, God continues to bless us. The most awesome and greatest blessing we receive is Jesus. When we ask for a blessing for ourselves or others, we are asking God to fulfil his plan. We often use the word *blessing* to indicate our belief that we are being provided for or protected by God. Finally, we use the word *blessing* to signify our relationship with God. It is an acknowledgment that all good comes from God. Our blessings call upon God's blessing.

- What actions can you take that will make you a blessing to others?
- Name some people who have been a blessing to you and tell why.



When you approach the tabernacle remember that he has been waiting for you for twenty centuries.

—Saint Josemaría Escrivá

Strengthen belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Visit the Pflaum Eucharist resources page.



Connecting **GOSPEL**

and CHURCH TEACHING

What Is the Meaning of Discipleship?

There are some words we use that hold expectations within themselves. When I use the word *chef*, I associate with it a person who is skilled with food. I expect a good meal from a chef. When I use the word *spouse*, I understand that implicit in that word is faithfulness to another. When we use the word *disciple* to identify the followers of Jesus, many things are implicit in the word. One of those is someone sent on mission. "The task of every Christian is based on that 'go'... which Jesus gave as an instruction to

his disciples and which implies going out, making haste, accompanying, thus becoming true missionary disciples" (*Directory for Catechesis*, 68). Witnessing through action and proclaiming through words is foundational for discipleship. Even if it was not something we heard much about in our parishes or homes, it has always been the teaching of the Church. Are you prepared to live out that aspect of being a disciple?

➔ To learn more, refer to CCC, 1877–1889 or go to Booklet 8, Session 2 in Growing Faith.



Closing PRAYER

Holy Spirit, source of all inspiration, give me the wisdom and strength I need to witness to the gift of our salvation in Christ Jesus. Amen.

FAMILY CORNER

Scan here for parent resources. ➔



Question of the Week

What can our family do this week to spread the Good News through our actions?



Family Prayer

God, help us to share your Good News through our actions. Amen.

Becoming Disciples of the Word

Sunday's

READINGS

Deuteronomy 4:1–2, 6–8
James 1:17–18, 21b–22, 27
Mark 7:1–8, 14–15, 21–23

Scan the code to read today's readings. ➔



Opening PRAYER

Lord, help me to find moments in my daily routines that can become reminders of your presence. Amen.



Thoughts for REFLECTION

What can help you to become more aware that your thoughts lead to actions?

Virtue and vice are both habitual patterns. Name a virtue that was once a difficult choice for you that has now become a natural response because of your consistent choice.

Awaken is written and edited by Jo Ann Paradise, D.Min.



What You NEED to KNOW

Scripture Background

Deuteronomy 4:1–2, 6–8

Why are the Israelites called the chosen people? This contradicts the revelation of Jesus that God has no favorites. This term may come from one of the meanings of the word *chosen*. When we say someone was chosen, it often has the connotation of being special. “I was chosen to lead the line to recess!” Moses makes clear what God means when he calls the Israelites his chosen people. The Israelites have been chosen by God to live in right relationship with him through the Law. Through the lived practice of their faith, they will bring other peoples, those who believe in other gods, to know Yahweh as the one true God. They are chosen for a mission—a mission of evangelization. “For what nation is there that has gods so close to it as the LORD, our God...” (v. 7).

James 1:17–18, 21b–22, 27

James shares three thoughts to ground his conclusion that all that is good is a gift from God. God has willed reconciliation with the world through his Son, Jesus. This makes the first disciples the “first fruits” of the new age. Because of this, the Word (the Good News of salvation) has taken root in their hearts. Now, a drum roll, please!

James proclaims, “Be doers of the word and not just hearers only” (v. 22). Faith and action are partners in the dance of discipleship. We cannot simply pray for the orphans and widows. Our prayers must lead us to action. Our action calls for both charity (generous giving) and work toward eliminating systems that bring about the suffering of the oppressed.

Mark 7:1–8, 14–15, 21–23

Remember being called to the table for dinner with the phrase “Go wash your hands”? This cleansing practice was part of the ritual of Jewish households, commanded in the Law of Moses. Its meaning however, was more than hygiene. The hand washing signaled that something sacred was about to happen. The prayer recited during the ritual was a reminder that living in right relationship with God requires living his Law. This may help us understand why the Pharisees become so upset when they observe some of Jesus’ disciples preparing to eat without purifying themselves. Jesus’ responds, “You disregard God’s commandment but cling to human tradition” (v. 8). Jesus is reminding the Pharisees that they have separated the ritual from its meaning.





Points to Ponder

Creed, Code, and Cult

Today we reflect upon the relationship between faith and religion. While both speak to our spiritual lives, they are distinct. There are people who refer to faith in a quantitative way. We are misled to believe that God gives us something that is measured. The truth is that God with great love invites us into relationship. He creates us with the capacity to recognize and the freedom to respond to his invitation. We decide whether or not to grow in that relationship. Faith, like all relationships, is developed over time. Religion is a communal expression of faith. All religions have the components of creed, code, and cult. A creed expresses a common set of beliefs shared in a common theological language. Based on creed, the community develops a code, a set of behaviors that express the values of their beliefs. Finally, cult is the common experience of ritual and worship. The word *cult* has only recently developed a negative meaning.

- How would you explain the statement “Religion should always be in service of faith”?
- As you reflect upon your own development in faith, share how one aspect of your relationship with God has grown.



“O Lord Jesus, you are truly present. Amen!”

The Eucharist is the living heart of each of our parishes and indeed of the Church herself. Without the Eucharist, the Church simply does not exist.

—Saint John Paul II

Strengthen belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Visit the Pflaum Eucharist resources page.



Connecting **GOSPEL**

and CHURCH TEACHING

God’s Plan for Salvation

It is important to know the Church’s teaching about her own existence. “The Church has her origin in the Holy Trinity.... In his plan for the salvation of humanity, God the Father willed the existence of the Church. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, established a community of disciples and died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, works within the Church to keep her members faithful to the Gospel” (*United States Catholic Catechism for*

Adults, p. 129). The Holy Spirit continually helps us to understand the fullness of God’s revelation. We also hear the Church assert, “Those who through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and moved by grace, try in their own actions to do his will...those too may achieve eternal salvation.” (*Lumen gentium*, no. 16)

➔ To learn more, refer to CCC, 422–442 or go to Booklet 4, Session 1 in Growing Faith.



Closing PRAYER

Holy Spirit, in you our Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Help me to grow in appreciation of your presence and guidance in our Church. Amen.

FAMILY CORNER

Scan here for parent resources. ➔



Question of the Week

How do you honor Jesus with your words and actions?



Family Prayer

Dear Jesus, help us to be true in our faith and love for you. Let our words and our actions reflect that love. Amen.