October, 2017 This month’s issue of Impact focuses on the primary call of disciples — to follow Jesus, live in mission, and have a positive effect through the way in which share the love of God with others. A few special notes this month:

The opening of page two was written as a way of opening a conversation about the relationship between faith and reason. There is much evidence that our children and teens need to know that, as Catholics, we do not see faith being in conflict with science and that, in fact, many leading scientists throughout the centuries, including our own time, have been and are Catholic Christians.

Beginning this month, you will notice a web link in the footer of Impact to our new blog, “Everyday Impact.” This is a free and open posting that we hope will help you bring timely material to your people to extend the impact of Impact each month. Please also share this with your colleagues and friends, and invite them to explore Impact for their dioceses and parishes.

— Leisa Anslinger and Amberly Boerschinger

Homily Connections

October 1: We know that being a person of faith calls us to live in particular ways — we are called to serve, to love, to give, even when we might be tempted to do be focused on ourselves.. Today’s readings are point to the straightforward call of God to each of us: accept the call to live for God and others, so that our actions will be a witness to our commitment as children of God and disciples of Jesus Christ.

Connecting with everyday life: How many times do we catch ourselves saying or doing something that we know we should not? How often do we stop ourselves and do what we know is right, even when that “right thing” is not the easy, simple, or comfortable thing to do? Today is a good day to ask your people if faith is a driving force in their lives. Are their daily decisions shaped by their faith in Jesus Christ? Share an example from your own experience to help people reflect.

October 8: When we read today’s passage from the Gospel of Matthew, we immediately see in Jesus’ parable the reality of Christ’s passion and death. We also ask ourselves, are we bearing fruit? Are we faithfully living Christ’s mission, or are we like the vineyard that has gone wild, or the disappointing and unfaithful tenants?

Connecting with everyday life: What does faithful, fruitful discipleship “look like” in the lives of your people? Offer concrete examples of the ways in which you know some are living the mission of Christ in their lives at home, work, parish, and world. Parents who sacrifice in order to take care of their children (especially those who have children with special health or learning needs); people who strive to be ethical and kind in a difficult work environment; those who selflessly give time to parish ministries; people who are caring for elderly parents, etc. Challenge everyone to consider their call to “keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard.”

October 15: We are offered a banquet of Christ’s life and love every day, at Mass, and in our lives as Christian people. Yet, how often do we take this gift for granted, our outright refuse to accept the gift and its call to be people of Christ in the world? Today’s Gospel is especially challenging, and offers us an opportunity to speak the truth in love. Sometimes, we “refuse to come” by skipping Mass, going through the motions of attendance without turning our heart to Christ. Still, we know that if we put God first, everything else will fall into place!

Connecting with everyday life: Ask your people to consider how each accepts Christ’s invitation to the banquet. Are they faithful in their participation in the Eucharist? Do they pray each day? Are they learning and growing in faith? In the Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis urges each of us to be open to an encounter or renewed encounter with God’s love, daily. Invite your people to open their minds, hearts, and lives to that encounter, knowing that a banquet of love awaits!

**October 22**: “I am the Lord, there is no other.” “Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” God is the origin of all that is good and holy. The manner in which we recognize God’s grace in our midst, and in which we grow in gratitude for our lives, gifts, and resources shape us as disciples and stewards. The way in which we use our resources is a statement of faith.

Connecting with everyday life: The reality is, it all belongs to God! All we are, have, and will be is given to us in trust. We are called to steward it well. Taking this to heart is a “game changer.” Once we have the flash of insight in which we see that all is God’s, intended to be used well, to be shared with others, to make a positive difference in the world, there is no going back. Everything changes as a result. Share a personal experience of a time in which you recognized the grace of God in your own life, and the responsibility of responding to this grace in your life.

**October 29**: Love God, love neighbor. When we love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, we will naturally come to see our neighbor as our self. These two commandments are the sum of all we are called to be and to do as Christian people.

Connecting with everyday life: How do we view the people around us, especially those who are different — the differently abled, immigrants, single and/or young adults, those with varying ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds? How can we begin to see one another as, in the words of St. John Paul II, “those who are a part of me”? This is the question we may ask today, because the ways in which we do this are a direct result of our love of God — we cannot love God and hate, or even ignore, our neighbor. Invite your people to think of the people in their lives, in your city, or in the world that they see as “other.” Then invite them to take a step, spiritually and practically, toward seeing that person or group as someone like themselves — a child of God. If there is a specific incident you can point to in your own life, share the story. Your people will be inspired and challenged through your sharing.

At Parish Meetings or in Adult Faith Formation this Month

Opening Prayer

Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Your ways, O Lord, make known to me; teach me your paths,

guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.

Remember that your compassion, O Lord, and your love are from of old.

The sins of my youth and my frailties remember not;

in your kindness remember me, because of your goodness, O Lord.

Good and upright is the Lord; thus he shows sinners the way.

He guides the humble to justice, and teaches the humble his way. (PS 25:4-5, 8-10, 14)

Loving God, guide us this day as we seek to grow as your good and holy people.

We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Listen to Sacred Scripture: MT 22:34-40

Read: Select a portion of Impact to read.

Share: your thoughts, using these questions to guide your reflection:

What moment comes to mind in which you had a “flash of insight” that changed your way of seeing God, others, and the world?

How do you continue to grow as a follower of Jesus who lives Christ’s mission and causes a positive effect in the lives of others?

Commit: Use Impact this Month to guide your continued prayer and reflection in the coming month.

Offer one another a sign of Christ’s peace.

# Follow Jesus

Let us begin with a bold question. Does faith make a difference in your life? Is your relationship with Jesus a real, living reality, or do you go through the motions by occasionally coming to Mass or mumbling a prayer before meals, and leave all thoughts of faith behind the rest of the time?

Faith in Jesus Christ is to be the deriving force in our lives. Being a Christian should shape our daily decisions, attitudes, and actions. Yet, for many, something else is needed first — a “flash of insight” or a real encounter with Jesus. Whether your faith is deep or needs to be renewed, take a leap of faith and open your heart and mind to Jesus Christ. With the certainty that Jesus desires a meaningful relationship with us, we can be ready to follow him.

# Live in mission

Following Jesus is not only about an interior relationship with the Lord. Christ calls us into mission — to share God’s love, mercy, forgiveness, compassion, and life with others.

What is the impact of faith in your life? Do you show love to family members and friends, even when you would rather focus on yourself? Do you serve others through a parish ministry or local outreach organization? Do you give as a way of thanking God for all you have been given? Jesus is the love of God, poured out freely for all who will receive it. This is the Good News, the Gospel, of the Lord. Jesus gave completely of himself, holding nothing back. We cannot be passive recipients of this great gift! Disciples who are good stewards embody and express the one mission of Christ: to do God’s will, to proclaim the Good News of salvation, to heal the afflicted, to care for one’s sisters and brothers, to give life — life to the full — as Jesus did. (SDR, 14)

# Cause an effect

When we live our faith “out loud,” sharing our gifts and caring for others, we have the opportunity to cause a positive effect, to allow God’s love to be known and experienced through us.

We are sometimes hesitant to recognize the impact of our words and actions on others. Yet we know in our hearts that what we do makes a difference, for ill or for the better. As disciples, we can make a difference, in the lives of individual people and in the life of the Church, our city, and world. What impact will your stewardship make in the life of another? How will you cause an effect for the good of others, as you share in Christ’s mission to bring life, light, mercy, and peace through your words, actions, service, and ministry?

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# See Grace in Your midst

God is the origin of all that is good.

In our time, in which people place absolute value in scientific proof, faith, religion, and an appreciation of mystery are sometimes seen as incompatible with reason. Yet, as St. John Paul II noted, “faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.” (Fides et Ratio, introduction) In faith, we ponder the meaning of life and our place in the world, as children of God, who is the origin of the universe. Through reason, we strive to understand the complexities of the universe and all that it holds. As people of faith, we see grace in our midst in the beauty that surrounds us — life, relationships, and all of creation. As we ponder this, we grow in wonder and gratitude, recognizing that all comes from and belongs to God.

# Give in Return

How do we say “thank you” to God?

All we are, have, and will be has been given to us in trust by our good and gracious God. Our way of thanking God for these abundant blessings is to give, not out of obligation, but because deep within ourselves, we know that this is who we are called to be. It is this way of life which Jesus shows us, and which we are to live as disciples. “Life is not given to us so that we may jealously guard it, but is given to us so that we may give it in return.” (Pope Francis, April 24, 2013)

# Love God, love your neighbor

When asked what commandment is the greatest, Jesus replied, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (MT 22:34-40)

Love God, love our neighbor. It sounds so simple. And yet, we know that it is anything but simple. Loving God requires us to place our trust in One who cannot be seen and yet knows us better than we know ourselves. Loving God calls us to order our lives in relationship to God and God’s ways, the way of self-giving love. When our heart, soul, and mind are centered on God, we will see ourselves as uniquely created, God’s very own.

Loving our neighbor is the way in which we show our love for God. When we love God with our whole being, we understand that our neighbor is a child of God, one who is God’s prized possession, just as each of us is. The truth is that every person is created out of love, for love. As Christ himself taught us, whatever we do for the least among us, we do for him. Loving our neighbor is, after all, our greatest act of faith, of discipleship, and of stewardship.

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In the lives of disciples, however, something else must come before the practice of stewardship. They need a flash of insight — a certain way of seeing — by which they view the world and their relationship to it in a fresh, new light. — SDR, p. 39

Impact this month

1. Follow Jesus. Open your heart and mind in prayer. Thank God for your blessings. Ask the Lord to be with you, and to guide you toward him.
2. Live in Mission. Make a commitment to share your time and attention, talents and gifts, money and resources in order to share God’s love with others.
3. Cause an Effect. Be attentive to the impact you may have through your words and actions. Go out of your way to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

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