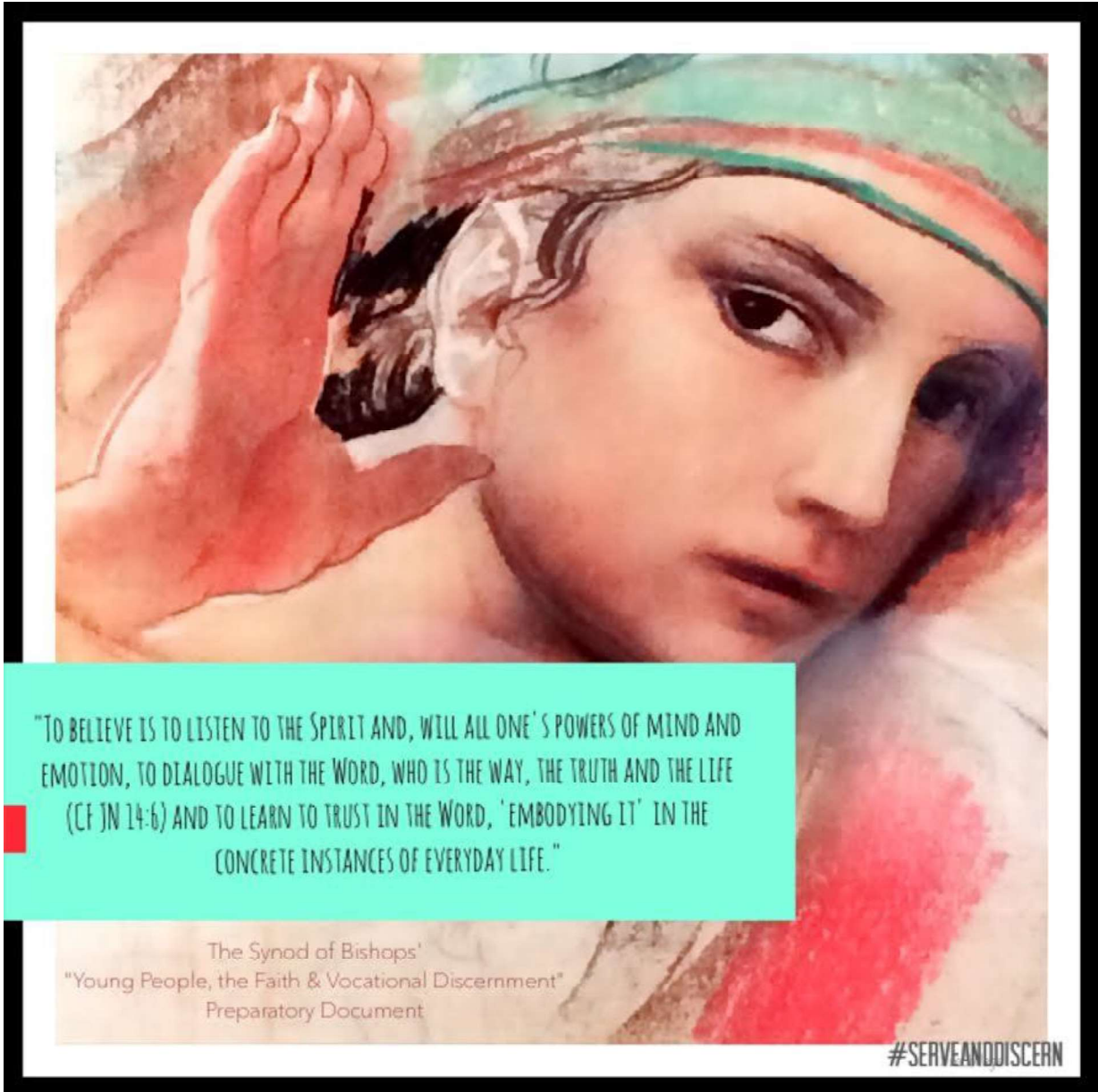


-Week 7-

Interculturation of the Gospels: Listening for the Signs of the Times



"TO BELIEVE IS TO LISTEN TO THE SPIRIT AND, WITH ALL ONE'S POWERS OF MIND AND EMOTION, TO DIALOGUE WITH THE WORD, WHO IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE (CF JN 14:6) AND TO LEARN TO TRUST IN THE WORD, 'EMBODYING IT' IN THE CONCRETE INSTANCES OF EVERYDAY LIFE."

The Synod of Bishops'
"Young People, the Faith & Vocational Discernment"
Preparatory Document

#SERVEANDDISCERN

-Week 7-

Interculturation of the Gospels: Listening for the Signs of the Times

Last week, we explored “Living the Good News of the Gospel: Scripture as a Guide,” which invited us to view Scripture as a guide for our faith journeys. We were also invited to meditate with some suggested Scripture passages utilizing the ancient art of *lectio divina*. Continuing into this seventh week of our Benedictine Volunteers 20-weeks Vocational Discernment Series inspired by the Synod of Bishops’ “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment” Preparatory Document, we explore “Interculturation of the Gospels: Listening for the Signs of the Times.” How can we relate Scripture to our modern, everyday lives? What does it mean to listen for the signs of our times in different cultures?

The *Preparatory Document* describes listening and responding to call not only as a personal and private act, but also as a public action of ‘embodying’ the values of the Gospels into everyday life. Scripture can guide us by speaking to and informing our family, community, cultural, social, political, and economic spheres. When we ‘interculturalize’ the Gospel, we integrate personal response with socio-cultural response in a way that vitalizes our communities. In doing so, there are two important things to be mindful of—the thing we seek to understand and the culture in which we seek to appropriate this understanding. For many of us, the values of the Gospels that we seek to understand are very similar: compassion, justice, patience, mercy, humility, love. These values are universal and generally understood by many. However, how different cultures each choose to act compassionately, advocate for justice, or model humility may look very different.

For Jesus, there were many different cultures to navigate and negotiate through in his own time. Two cultures presented to us in the Gospels are Jesus’ family culture and his Jewish culture. We see a young 12-year old Jesus challenge his parents when he chooses to leave their side and spend time at the temple listening and asking questions of teachers. We also see Jesus in his adult life challenge and question the Pharisees when he observes them failing to lead others with integrity and compassion. Jesus models for us what it looks like to move beyond personal response towards socio-cultural response. At a young age, Jesus recognizes his sense of personal mission and responds to it by standing up for what he believes in. He verbalizes his understanding of the Word and extends these values into action in his everyday life. He is also very mindful of the culture to which he is speaking to and modifies his understanding for others. So often, we hear Jesus speak in metaphor and parable within the Gospels. This is one way Jesus culturally appropriates his understanding of the Word in a way that relates to and reaches others where they are. One of the most powerful messages of Jesus’ mission and ministry is his recognizing that understanding of the Word means taking responsibility for them by embodying God’s love for others in tangible ways.

While reading Scripture, it is helpful to remember that the Gospels are very old, ancient texts. Jesus lived in a different time, culture, and society from ours. However, we can learn from Jesus how to listen to the signs of the times. In other words, we can ask ourselves, “How does this relate to the culture and society that I live in? What does this call me to do in my own community?” Doing so can help us identify important messages for our modern world to respond to. Like Jesus, we can transform our personal understanding of Scripture into social action and community engagement so that others, too, may experience Christ’s love extended through us.

Questions for Reflection:

- Name 2-3 communities you belong to or contribute to. These communities may be family, professional, or institutional relationships. What are the unique cultures and dynamics of each of these groups?
- What are your roles in these communities? In what ways have your and others’ contributions supported these communities?
- Call to heart an intention you have for a community you love as you pray:

Loving God,
You speak to us through your living Word.
Your Word tells us your story.
Your Word comforts our lives.
Your Word challenges the way we live.
Help us to live your Word each day.

Loving God,
You are present to us whenever we gather to worship you.
You call us to be a community of prayer in our Catholic church.
You remind us that we gather as a community of faith.
You tell us that whenever we gather in your name, you are with us.
Help us to celebrate your presence in our community worship.

Loving God,
We are signs of your presence in our world whenever we witness
To your love and compassion,
To your kindness and care,
To your justice and peace.
Strengthen us for the work of witnessing.

Amen.

**The above is a revised version of “A Prayer for Nurturing Our Catholic Community” by
The Toronto Catholic District School Board Catholic Teachers’ Center, 2009.*