

Cycle A

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary 106

Reading I: Wisdom 12: 13, 16-19

The writer of the book of Wisdom speaks honestly and wisely as he points to the fact that when we lack power, self-serving motives can easily creep in. Fear, rather than **compassion**, can become the real--even if unconscious--motive for our good works. The attitude of "I'll be good to you, so you'll be good to me" can be an unspoken motivation. In addition concern for how we might be perceived by others might be the driving force behind "just" behavior. It may well be that only when we don't *have* to do something or when we have nothing to *lose*, can we say we have a true and free spirit to be persons of **compassion**.

Reading 2: Romans 8:26-27

Saint Paul speaks of a *weakness* we all have encountered more than once in our lives. He encourages us to know and believe that the Spirit comes to us in moments of weakness. It is exactly in times of weakness that our hearts can be opened and the Spirit may enter in and teach us what we most need to know at that given moment. **Compassion** is that virtue that may elude us if we do not allow our own brokenness of heart to inform us of the needs of others. It is essential for us to be open to the Spirit wanting to search our hearts, for it is from within the heart that **compassion** springs.

Gospel: Matthew 13: 24-43

Upon first reading this parable of Jesus in Saint Matthew's gospel, it may not seem to be a parable about compassion. However given a closer look, we can see ourselves as the *grounds* on which the sower is planting the seed. Each of us may, at one time or another, be the path, the soil without much depth, the thorny and weedy place and the rich soil. **Compassion** occurs when we open our hearts to ourselves and to others who may be experiencing a lack of faith. In these moments, we may struggle to be the rich soil in which the word of God can grow and thrive. Often we are conduits of God's **compassion** to others but may not have **compassion** with ourselves when we face moments of doubt. It is during these times we must call upon the Spirit to enter into our hearts.



build. plant. grow.
the word this week



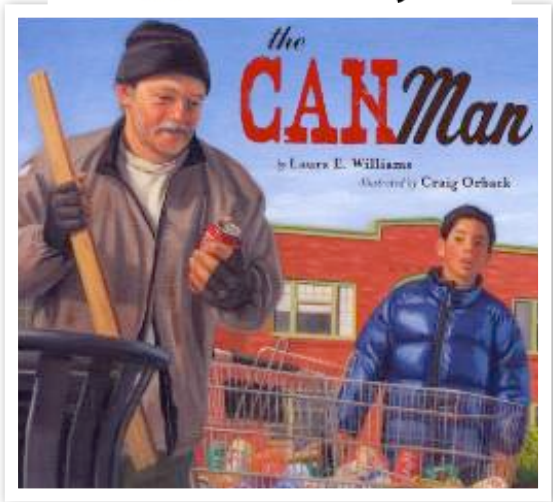
ordinary
time



lectionary
reading



children's story



The Can Man

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Illustrated by Craig Orback

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character
education
activity

**Compassion is the virtue that
allows us to put ourselves in
another person's shoes.**

The Can Man

The Can Man lived in Tim's building until the auto shop he worked at closed. Unable to find a job, he's now homeless and relies on the cash he gets from redeeming empty cans to survive.

When Tim learns that his parents won't give him enough money to buy him a skateboard for his birthday, he takes his cue from the Can Man and decides to earn the money himself. However, while Tim amasses several bags of cans, the Can Man finds almost nothing. Tim has been venturing out ahead and collecting in the homeless man's territory. The Can Man harbors no hard feelings and in fact, helps Tim maneuver through the redemption center. Eventually, Tim finds that his desire for a skateboard is not equal to the Can Man's need for a winter coat and he gives him the money from his efforts. Tim is moved by **compassion** within his heart.

Activity

Step One: If the parish has a Saint Vincent de Paul Society or another Outreach Group find out what the urgent needs are and invite the children to organize a food, clothing or toiletry drive depending on what the needs are.

Step Two: For one week or longer invite each of the students to bring something that is needed and place those items at the base of the table in the prayer corner of the classroom.

Step Three: Invite the leadership of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society or the Outreach Group to come and talk to the children and to give them an opportunity to thank the children for their acts of kindness and **compassion**.

Compassion can energize us to want to work for the needs of others. Compassion is an active love shown to others .



case study

Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.

What could you do today?

With your parent's permission, go through your closet and see if there are any clothes or shoes that are in very good shape but no longer fit. Gather all of these items and bring them to Goodwill, Catholic Charities or some other organization that provides these items for those in need. You may wish, again with your family's permission, to make this an activity for all in the family. In the ancient church there was a saint of old by the name of Origen that said *the coat that hangs in your closet unused could be providing warmth to a brother or sister*. When you and your family engage in this activity it can be seen as a prayer and clearly an act of **compassion**.

Look Feel Know Act

Have you ever been hungry and heard your stomach growling because it needed food? Have you ever been cold and not had a coat or sweater with you? What about a time when you were tired but there just was no place to lie down and sleep? There are literally hundreds (maybe thousands in some large cities) of people in our local communities that go without food, adequate clothing and housing. If each person would look at the amount of food and clothing we amass, and then periodically provide these items to food banks and other outreach organizations for the poor, there would be a sense of doing something for the poor and the hungry. Once we have recalled what it felt like to be cold, hungry or tired with no place to sleep, we are better able to place ourselves in the shoes of those who have these same experiences but have little help in fulfilling those needs. To place ourselves in the shoes of another person is known as empathy and from empathy grows **compassion**. One of the definitions of love, which is steeped in compassion, is to want and work for another what I want for myself.

The Can Man is a great story to help students realize that there is a great difference between wants and needs. God wishes to provide for the needs of all human beings, but sadly there are individuals in the world that become greedy and do not see other people or their needs. Through his interaction with the Can Man, the young boy in the story, is compelled to recognize the man's need and how that differed from what the boy wants. This story can serve as a grand opportunity for students to see the importance of **compassion**. The story and the suggested activities might spark something in the hearts of young people that could start a movement of **compassion**.



**closing
tool**

Pray that you will have compassion for the needs of others and see within them the God that you love. Pray that you will always see the intimate connection between loving God and loving others. Amen.



**Santa Clara
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