

Cycle B

18th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Lectionary #113

Reading I: Exodus 16: 2-4, 12-15

Today's first reading serves as an excellent precedent to today's excerpt from the Gospel of Saint John, which is commonly called the *Bread of Life Discourse*. Both this reading and the Gospel emphasize that all true food or nourishment has one ultimate source: God. **Belief** that God will provide is a theme that comes through clearly for the Israelites, who see the food provided for them after they complain of hunger. Saint John, in his Gospel, will place emphasis on the bread of the Last Supper and the **belief** that this bread is truly the Body of Christ and that the wine is truly the Blood of Christ.

Reading 2: Ephesians 4: 17, 20-24

Saint Paul addresses the fact that there is a large variety of people with different faiths and gods living within the city of Ephesus. He stresses that the newly formed Church is surrounded by these various faiths and encourages members of the Church to hold firmly to their **belief** in Jesus Christ and all that he taught. Following Christ and being baptized into the Church at this time was an adult commitment. This meant that it required a conversion to a new way of life that had been transformed by **belief** in Christ Jesus.

Gospel: John 6: 24-35

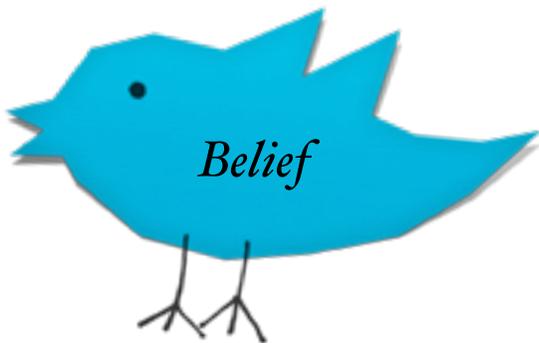
Belief is at the very heart of Saint John's Gospel. The significance of **believing** for Saint John is evident in the fact that he uses the term nearly one-hundred times and always as a verb—an action. For Saint John, truly seeing the sign with the eyes and the heart is crucial to **belief**. Jesus calls the people who have been fed physically by the loaves and fishes to **believe** that he is truly the One sent from God, but the crowds still call for a sign. This action on the part of the crowd clearly indicates that they have failed to see the true meaning of Jesus' providing food for them. **Belief** is something that takes work: if one does not attend to nurturing their **beliefs**, they can easily be overshadowed by the physical needs in life.



build. plant. grow.
the word this week



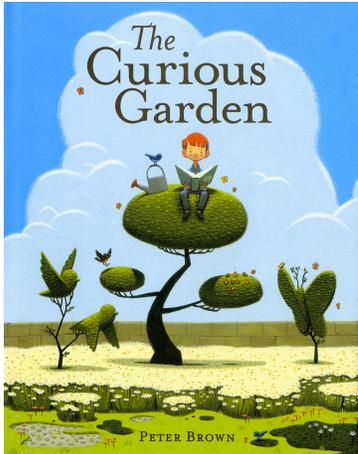
ordinary
time



lectionary
reading



children's
story



The Curious Garden

Written by Peter Brown

Illustrated by Peter Brown

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character
education
activity

Belief is a wise wager. Granted that faith cannot be proved, what harm will come to you if you gamble on its truth and it proves false? If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation, that God exists.

-Blaise Pascal

The Curious Garden

The Curious Garden serves well to illustrate the importance of allowing **belief** and faith to grow while reminding us that it is necessary to nurture and care for them. While out exploring one day, a little boy named Liam discovers a struggling garden and decides to take care of it. As time passes, the garden spreads through the dark, grey city, transforming it into a lush and vibrantly colorful world. This story lends itself to the importance of being environmentally aware and can be a great parallel for caring for one's faith and **beliefs**.

Activity: Growing in Your Beliefs

Step One: Gather individual pictures of all the students in the class to be used as the center of a paper flower. The petals of the flower, made out of colorful construction paper, will surround the picture of each child.

Step Two: Provide the students with their picture cut in a circle as if it is the center of a flower. Invite the students to write things that will help them grow in their faith and **belief** in God on the petals.

Step Three: Display these flowers in the prayer corner of the classroom, or somewhere they can be easily seen. If there is a table in the prayer corner that has a tablecloth, you could pin these flowers onto the tablecloth.

Step Four: Ask each student to share one of their petals of **belief** with the class.

**Be*lief-noun-trust,
faith, or confidence in
someone or something**



case study

**Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.**

What could you do today?

Most groups of people that live and work together often have a “mission statement” that directs how they live their lives and how they approach their work. Mission statements are based on the group’s **beliefs** and values. With the help of your parents and the guidance of those things you believe to be absolutely important to you, try to put together your very own mission statement to help guide your life and decision making. After working on your personal mission statement, you could make a large copy of it and decorate it before having it framed and placed on your bedroom wall.

Take a look at different schools and churches and you will notice that their mission statements are posted in very prominent places where people can see them. Organizations often have their mission statements posted in meeting rooms where they make decisions so that they are reminded of what their group stands for. These statements guide them in all their decision making so that their decisions are based on their **beliefs**.

Look Feel Know Act

You have most likely seen the important role that your **beliefs** play in your life and how those **beliefs** help you to make good and healthy decisions. Once these have become part of who you are, you can know that having **beliefs** that are grounded in loving God and loving your neighbor will help guide you in all of your decisions and movements. Reviewing and reminding yourself of your personal mission statement based on your **beliefs** will serve as a roadmap for how you will act in your life.

The Curious Garden can serve the students in understanding how **beliefs** are not stagnant, but grow and evolve as we grow in wisdom, age, and grace, as the Scriptures remind us. The readings for today help us understand that **belief** is something that is sown in each person just as a seed is sown into the soil. Because of this, it is essential that **beliefs** are nurtured and cared for so that they can grow.



**closing
tool**

Pray always that the faith and belief that is sown into you by God may grow and develop as you tend to and care for that belief. The journey of faith and belief is a collaborative relationship between you and God. God gives the gift and it is our duty to care for that gift. Amen.



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