



build. plant. grow.
the word this week



ordinary
time



lectionary
reading

Cycle B

Twenty-Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Lectionary #137

Reading I: Numbers 11: 25-29

In today's reading from the Book of Numbers, we hear about God bestowing the spirit upon the elders. It is only God's choice to give or withhold the spirit—it is a free gift that cannot be held by one individual. Moses understood this and saw that God was seeking an **inclusiveness** that would move people away from a sense of status. Moses not only affirmed the liberty and unpredictability of God's actions, but wished that everyone could be so gifted. God draws a circle to **include** people, but through human arrogance and pride, we often draw circles that exclude others instead.

Reading 2: James 5: 1-6

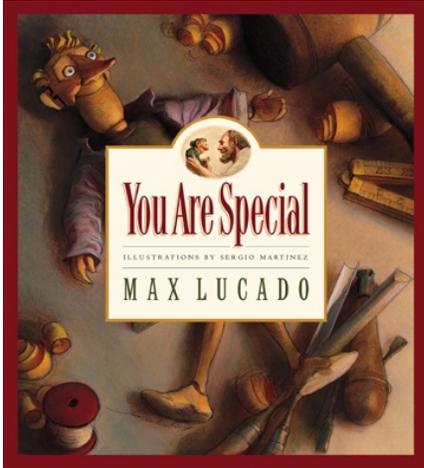
This letter of Saint James continues to challenge the human weakness of divisions and specifically speaks to those who have become wealthy by making others poor. He pleads with the community to be connected and **inclusive**. This letter is written in a time that was thought to be the end of the world. Saint James warns the rich that even though they have stored up treasures for the last days, the end times that are coming will reverse all of their hopes. Time and again, the Scriptures advise us to be **inclusive**.

Gospel: Mark 9: 38-43, 45, 47-48

In this passage from Saint Mark's Gospel, the disciples are annoyed that *one not of their company* was doing good works in the name of Jesus. The complaints from the disciples indicate that they wish to have such people excluded, but Jesus will have none of this. Jesus, like Moses in the first reading, is not threatened by another person doing good works in his name. Rather, he is grateful and instructs the disciples not to interfere. His message is **inclusiveness**.



children's
story



You Are Special

Written by Max Lucado

Illustrated by Sergio Martinez

Publication: 1997 Crossway

ISBN-10: 0891079319

ISBN-13: 978-0891079316



character
education
activity

**An individual is not yet living
until they can rise above the
narrow confines of
individualistic concerns to the
broader concerns of all
humanity.
-Martin Luther King Jr.**

You Are Special

In this heartwarming story, we hear of Punchinello, a small wooden creature referred to as a Wemmick. Punchinello is not one of the stellar Wemmicks because his paint is chipped and he does not look as beautiful as some of the others do. It is Eli, the woodcarver, who helps Punchinello understand how special he is no matter what others might think. The vital message in this story for children and adults alike is that regardless of how the world evaluates them, God cherishes everyone just as they are. This story reminds us that God wants us all to be **included** and that we are always **included** in his love for us.

Reversible Musical Chairs

Step One: The objective here is to show children that they can turn exclusive situations into **inclusive** ones. Begin with a classical game of Musical Chairs. Place chairs in a circle so that there is one fewer chair than there are students. Play music and have the children walk around the chairs. Instruct the students to find a seat as soon as the music stops.

Step Two: Once this has occurred, there will be one student without a chair. Challenge the students to find a way for everyone to have a seat in the circle of chairs. Have them come up with ideas for this **inclusion**, such as by having two students share a chair, having a student stand on the rungs of two chairs, or sitting in another student's lap.

Step Three: Continue the process for a few rounds with the removal of a chair from the circle each time. Every time the music stops, have the group accommodate someone who would normally be excluded. At the end of the game, compliment the students on their creativity and willingness to make sure that everyone was **included**.

Being an inclusive Christian means that one respects, honors, and holds fast to one's traditions, but is also respectful towards the faith of others. Doing anything less is not Christian.



case study

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

What could you do today?

Take some time to think about instances when you have been left out of something, like when you were picked last for a team, didn't get a part in the play, or felt lonely because a group excluded you from something. Now, bring that to your conversation with God and realize that God NEVER excludes you. Since you are a unique image of God, recognize that you are called to be **inclusive** in all of your interactions with others. When people do this, it makes God happy because we are being just what he created us to be: his presence in the world.

Look Feel Know Act

See all the different faiths and faith traditions that exist around you and throughout the world. These traditions make up the great beauty of the world, but because of misunderstandings and lack of appreciation, they have also caused many divisions throughout history. Unity is one of the great ideals that Jesus has for the people of the earth even in the midst of their differences. Several years ago, Saint John XXIII called a council where he, along with bishops from all over the world, came together to make an official statement to the world that all faiths are to be appreciated and respected. We are all called to work together, to see everyone as children of God, and to join forces as people of good will. This proclamation occurs in the *Documents of Vatican II* in two places: The Decree on Ecumenism and the Declaration on Non-Christian Religions.

As people of good will, we are called to be **inclusive** in both words and actions so that we may see and live with one another as members of a loving human family.

The story *You Are Special* parallels the message of **inclusiveness** that is seen throughout the readings selected for this Sunday. We need these reminders so that we can remain focused on living together in harmony. Together, the scripture readings and story *You Are Special* direct us to recognize that God is **inclusive** and that we need to strive to draw a circle that is **inclusive** of others rather than a circle that places others on the outside.



**closing
tool**

Pray always that the Holy Spirit that dwells within you will compel you to draw a circle within your life that includes others. Pray that you will be a person of welcome and hospitality and that the Lord will guide you in all of your encounters with others. Amen.



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