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Study Questions for the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*

The Gospel of St. Matthew

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THE GOSPEL OF SAINT MATTHEW

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:2–17.** What is the purpose of Matthew's genealogy of Jesus? What does it mean to say that this background is "foundational"?
2. **1:16.** Even though Joseph is not the biological father of the Child Jesus, he has responsibilities and exercises certain paternal rights when Jesus is born. What are these?
3. **1:23.** Matthew quotes Isaiah 7:14 and applies it to Jesus. Whose birth was Isaiah referring to? How has the name Emmanuel been fulfilled in Jesus?
4. **1:25.** In the statement that Joseph "knew her not until she had borne a son", what does the word "until" mean?

For application

1. **1:1–17.** Matthew's genealogy is intended to build the reader's faith in Jesus the Messiah. As you study this list of names, what about it helps to build up your faith in him?
2. **1:20.** Joseph had already been committed to Mary when the angel in the dream encouraged him not to "fear to take Mary your wife". How has God addressed fears you may have had about your state-in-life decisions?
3. **1:24.** What is the importance of the detail that Joseph "woke from sleep" as he was considering his relationship with Mary? What events in your life have entailed a similar "waking from sleep"? What happened as a result?
4. **1:25.** Matthew says that Joseph (not Mary) named the child and that he knew the meaning of the name. Who named you, and why? What does your name mean to you? What does it mean to God?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:1–3.** What were the origins of Herod the Great? What Old Testament prophecy caused Herod to be "troubled"?
2. **2:11.** The three gifts of the Magi have been understood as having symbolic and spiritual significance. On an allegorical level, how does St. Irenaeus understand these gifts? On a moral level, how does St. Gregory the Great understand their meaning?
3. **2:15.** Matthew quotes Hosea 11:1 with reference to the Holy Family's return from Egypt to Palestine. What is the link that Matthew is making between that event and Israelite history?
4. **Topical Essay: Is Matthew's Infancy Narrative Historical?** What are the five reasons given for defending the historical trustworthiness of Matthew's infancy narrative?

For application

1. **2:6.** Following St. Gregory's moral interpretation of the Magi's three gifts, how has

your behavior reflected wisdom, worship, and sacrifice?

2. **2:16–18.** God did not prevent Herod from killing innocent children in his effort to destroy Jesus. What effects have tragedies involving innocent persons had on your own or others' faith? How have you dealt with them?
3. **2:19–23.** Consider how God led Joseph to care for the Holy Family and protect them from dangers. How have you noticed the Holy Spirit guiding your life? How sure of his guidance have you been? Despite uncertainty, how have you followed his guidance?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:2.** Why does Matthew prefer the expression “the kingdom of heaven” over the expression “the kingdom of God”?
2. **3:6.** Which two Old Testament events in the Jordan River prefigure the saving power of Baptism?
3. **3:15.** Although Jesus is sinless and has no need to be baptized for repentance, he submits to John's baptism. Why?
4. **3:15. Word Study: Righteousness.** What does it mean to say that God is righteous? What does righteousness mean for us? How is this word used in Scripture?

For application

1. **3:1–2.** Assume that John the Baptist is speaking to you personally about repenting because “the kingdom of heaven is at hand”. What repentance do you think God has in mind for you to do?
2. **3:7.** Suppose further that John addressed you as one of the “brood of vipers”. How might that figure apply to you? How would you respond to John's accusation?
3. **3:7, 10.** Compare John's warning with John 15:2, 6. When the Baptist speaks of the “wrath to come” and fruitless trees being burned with fire, how is his teaching similar to that of Jesus? What kind of fruit does the Baptist expect of you?
4. **3:15.** What kind of righteousness does God have in mind for you? What does he want the outcome to be in your life?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:1–11.** Look up the passages referred to in the note from Deuteronomy 6 through 8. In what ways does the temptation of Jesus in the desert, as Matthew recounts it, fulfill Deuteronomy? What virtue does the Church see in Jesus' behavior? How?
2. **4:1.** Inasmuch as Jesus, as a divine Person, could not sin, what was the point of tempting him?
3. **4:12–16.** Since most prophets were reputed to come out of Judea, why did Jesus choose Galilee as the focus of his early ministry?
4. **4:23.** Matthew says that Jesus taught in synagogues. What was the importance of the synagogue for Jews, as distinct from that of the Temple in Jerusalem?

For application

1. **4:1.** Matthew says, “Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” What spiritual *benefit* can be gained through temptation, and why would the Holy Spirit lead you (or allow you to go) where you would have to face it?
2. **4:6.** Satan quotes Psalm 91 out of context, and Jesus immediately places it back into context. How have you tested God or presumed on his care for you? What was the result? What does Jesus’ reply to Satan tell you about the attitude you should foster toward God’s care?
3. **4:17.** Jesus opens his public ministry with the same message as that of John the Baptist, his cousin. If Jesus were to appear to you and reveal his plans for your life, what do you think his first words would be? Why?
4. **4:20, 22.** Matthew emphasizes that the fishermen immediately left their family business to become Jesus’ disciples. How has Jesus’ call on your life affected your relationships with your family, specifically parents and older relatives?

Chapter 5*For understanding*

1. **5:3–12.** How do the first seven beatitudes correspond to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (Is 11:2), according to St. Augustine? What about the eighth beatitude?
2. **5:17.** If the Old Covenant has not been abolished, what does the New Covenant do? Why are the laws of animal sacrifice no longer followed? What happened to the Old Covenant version of the moral law?
3. **5:21–30.** What new dimension does Jesus add to the commands not to kill and not to commit adultery?
4. **5:38–42.** What point does Jesus make about the law of retaliation (“an eye for an eye”)? What was the purpose of that law? What is Jesus’ response to it?

For application

1. **5:1–11.** Examine each of the eight beatitudes for the way it applies to your life, starting with spiritual poverty. How have the sufferings mentioned in the beatitudes manifested themselves in your life? Even though the promised blessings are fully realized in heaven, how are they being realized on earth?
2. **5:19–20.** What attitude do you think Jesus wants you to take regarding the observance of his law? How can your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees?
3. **5:27–30.** In an age when sexual expression is not only approved but promoted, how can you avoid looking lustfully at another person? What do Jesus’ warnings in verses 29–30 tell you about the importance of self-control?
4. **5:43–48.** What enemies has God given you to love? How can you love them? Why does he command you to love them?

Chapter 6*For understanding*

1. **6:7–8.** If Jesus is not condemning memorized and repeated prayer, what is he condemning?

2. **6:9–13.** Consider the structure of the Lord’s Prayer. Why is it called the “model of prayer”?
3. **6:22–23.** Read the annotation for these verses. How do the verses fit into Jesus’ remarks on attitudes toward money?
4. **6:28–30.** In using this rabbinic mode of arguing, what point is Jesus making? What is the anagogical significance of this passage?

For application

1. **6:1–18.** In your own prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, what elements of hypocrisy (a pretense of being better than you are) have you discerned? What have you done to remove the hypocrisy?
2. **6:12, 14–15.** When you pray the Lord’s Prayer, how do you respond to verse 12? Whom do you need to forgive? If you refuse to forgive, what (in effect) are you asking God to do to you?
3. **6:24.** What is your attitude toward your possessions? your estate? your career? whatever you hold valuable? How are you “serving” these things? How does that attitude compare with what Jesus says in 5:3?
4. **6:31–34.** Jesus often warns his disciples not to be anxious, because anxiety contradicts the attitude he is promoting here. What are you most commonly anxious about? How does Jesus propose that you deal with your anxiety?

Chapter 7

For understanding

1. **7:1–6.** What kind of judgment does Jesus forbid in this passage? According to the note, what kind of judgment does he require elsewhere in this chapter?
2. **7:13–14.** On what is the comparison of the wide vs. narrow gate based? What was the significance of the gates in the Temple?
3. **7:21–23.** If working signs and wonders in Jesus’ name is not itself a safeguard against his condemnation, what is? What is the relationship of sanctifying grace to this passage?
4. **7:24–27.** When this passage is understood from a moral perspective, how does the wise man build and maintain the house of his soul? How does the foolish man fail to build and maintain his?

For application

1. **7:1–5.** Jesus addresses the human tendency to view others’ faults as worse than one’s own. Of whom are you most critical, or with whom do you compare yourself favorably? What prompts your criticism or comparison? What “log” do you need to remove from yourself?
2. **7:7–12.** What does verse 12 have to do with persevering prayer? What links have you noticed between prayer for yourself or others and the way you treat others?
3. **7:21–23.** How have your natural talents or charismatic gifts contributed to your own growth in holiness? How might they be hindering it?
4. **7:24–27.** How often do you make use of the normal means of sanctification, particularly prayer and the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist?

Chapter 8

For understanding

1. **8:4.** How is mortal sin like leprosy? What is the role of the priest in the restoration process?
2. **8:11–12.** How are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob linked with the Gentile nations who come from the east and the west to the kingdom of God?
3. **8:22.** What does Jesus mean by saying, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead”? What point is he trying to make?
4. **8:32.** What is the significance of driving the swine into the Sea of Galilee?

For application

1. **8:8.** At Mass we repeat the words of the centurion before receiving the Eucharist. How often do you really pay attention to what you are saying? How well do you mean these words?
2. **8:18–22.** How are creature comforts and family commitments affecting your willingness to follow Jesus? How likely is it that others who know you would agree with your assessment?
3. **8:26.** When have you cried out to God for safety because you were afraid? How did your faith in Jesus calm the fears?
4. **8:33–34.** Did the citizens of Gadara pay more attention to the fate of the demoniacs or of the swine? If God’s action causes a change in the direction of your life or that of an acquaintance, on which are you more likely to focus, the change of life or God, who changed your life or that of your acquaintance?

Chapter 9

For understanding

1. **9:3.** Why did the scribes accuse Jesus of blasphemy when he forgave the sins of the paralytic?
2. **9:13.** What prompted Jesus to quote Hosea 6:6, “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice”? What is the significance of the Hosea passage?
3. **9:16–17.** What point is Jesus making about the relationship between the New Covenant and the Old in these two verses?
4. **9:36.** What is the significance of the sheep/shepherd imagery in the Old Testament?

For application

1. **9:8.** Matthew suggests that, seeing Jesus forgive the sins of the paralytic and then heal him, the crowd was afraid of the God who gives such power to men. Recall a time when God acted powerfully in your experience. What reaction toward God did the event cause in you?
2. **9:9–13.** What is the proper sort of company for Christians? How do you respond when the “wrong” sort attempts to join your parish or community?
3. **9:17.** The Holy Spirit has been compared to new wine, and the self to a wineskin. How does the Holy Spirit cause you to “stretch” when he acts in your life?
4. **9:14–15.** How much a part of your religious life is fasting? What are your reasons for fasting or not fasting?

Chapter 10

For understanding

1. **10:2.** Why did Jesus choose 12 apostles, rather than 10 or 14?
2. **10:5.** Why did Jesus tell the apostles to “go nowhere among the Gentiles”?
3. **10:28.** If the disciples are not to fear “those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul”, whom *should* they fear, and why?
4. **10:42.** Who are the “little ones” in this verse?

For application

1. **10:9–10.** How have you been called on to exercise the faith to which this passage invites you? How have you been called on to give the sort of hospitality that the passage implies?
2. **10:24–25.** How much like your master are you when persecutions, disagreements, and misunderstandings arise against you or what you stand for?
3. **10:34–39.** What kinds of divisions has Jesus caused in your life? What would you do if Jesus asked you to turn away from or leave those you love most?
4. **10:39.** How has the paradox of this verse worked itself out in your life? If you do not know, what might “losing your life” for Jesus’ sake mean for you?

Chapter 11

For understanding

1. **11:11.** What does Jesus mean by saying “among those born of woman, there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist”, then adding that the “least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he”? Does Jesus criticize the saintliness of his cousin in this verse?
2. **11:12.** What does Jesus mean by saying that men of violence take the kingdom of heaven by force?
3. **11:23–24.** Why does Jesus compare Capernaum unfavorably with Sodom?
4. **11:25–27.** Look up the passages from John’s Gospel cited in the note. Which is most like these verses from Matthew? How so? What do they mean?

For application

1. **11:2–6.** When you ask Jesus a question, does he answer with words, or does he point to his deeds in your life? How have these deeds provided the answer you were looking for?
2. **11:16–19.** Do you tend to measure how the Gospel should be lived against the standards of religious or social practice around you? Or do you measure religious or social practice around you based on the standards of the Gospel? Which is harder to do?
3. **11:25.** How has your level of education helped or hindered your response to the words and deeds of Jesus? Would you consider yourself one of the “wise and learned” or one of the “infants”? Which should you be?
4. **11:29.** The word “yoke” connotes drudging, plodding work, yet Jesus is offering rest. What is the difference between his yoke and the heavy burden he is inviting you to lay down?

Chapter 12

For understanding

1. **12:18.** Why does Matthew quote Isaiah 42:1–4 here?
2. **12:31.** What is “blasphemy against the Spirit”? Why can it not be forgiven?
3. **12:46.** What four observations support the Church’s tradition that Mary was a perpetual virgin and that Jesus had no siblings?
4. **Chart: Jesus and the Old Testament.** What is typology? Why is it important for the understanding of Scripture?

For application

1. **12:9–14.** Read the note on this passage. What kinds of works do you engage in on the Christian Sabbath, the Lord’s Day? How do you use the day of rest? What do you think Jesus would make of the way you use it?
2. **12:36–37.** How carefully do you think before you speak? What does this passage suggest to you regarding casual talk that is critical of others?
3. **12:43–45.** After you receive forgiveness of sin, do you respond by growing in virtue? Are you leaving your soul open to the return of old, sinful habits or to the grace of God?
4. **12:50.** How would you recognize a brother or sister of Jesus today?

Chapter 13

For understanding

1. **13:11.** How does Jesus’ private instruction of the disciples reflect his intention to arrange the Church hierarchically?
2. **13:33.** How is the image of leaven used here? How is it often used in Scripture?
3. **Word Study: Parables.** How many ways are parables used in the Old Testament? For what purposes does Jesus use parables?
4. **13:52.** How does Matthew’s ministry reflect the role of the “scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven”?

For application

1. **13:3–9.** Jesus compares how you receive the word of God with the type of ground it falls on. Which type of ground most closely matches how *you* respond to his word? What makes you think so?
2. **13:24–30.** How do you answer criticisms that the Catholic Church is “dead” or “lifeless”? Where do you see signs that the wheat is growing?
3. **13:44–45.** Of what worth is the kingdom of heaven to you? Examine how you spend your time and ask yourself what you would sacrifice for heaven?
4. **13:54–57.** Have you had a relative or close friend evangelize you? What was your reaction? How close did the experience come to reflecting Jesus’ remark in verse 57?

Chapter 14

For understanding

1. **14:1–12.** What two points does this narrative make? What does it suggest about the

fate of the committed Christian?

2. **14:4.** What is the biblical reason John the Baptist cites for condemning the desire of Herod Antipas for Herodias?
3. **14:13–21.** How does the feeding of the five thousand in Matthew's Gospel reflect eucharistic language? What Old Testament event is similar?
4. **14:19.** How does their function of distributing the loaves and fishes point to the disciples' priesthood?

For application

1. **14:4.** What is your attitude toward unlawful sexual or marital unions within your family or church community? How have you sought God's wisdom in responding to such unions?
2. **14:13–21.** When did God ask you to do something you had no resources for? How did you know he was asking that? How did you respond? What was the result?
3. **14:12–13, 23.** How do you respond spiritually to grief? What is your prayer like when you are bereaved?
4. **14:28–31.** When have you asked God to let you do something you had no resources for? What was the result? How might Jesus' question to Peter apply to you?

Chapter 15

For understanding

1. **15:1–20.** In what way were the Pharisees, who advocated a strict observance of God's commandments, actually transgressing the law?
2. **15:19.** What is real defilement in religion? From where does it arise?
3. **15:26.** On a moral level, what sort of person does the Canaanite woman represent? How can such a person receive physical or spiritual healing?
4. **15:32–39.** What are the differences and similarities between this multiplication of food and that of 14:13–21?

For application

1. **15:3–6.** How may your religious attitudes and practices have substituted for, or taken the place of, the genuine care you owe your family, particularly your parents?
2. **15:8–9.** Which of your religious attitudes and practices are actually derived from personal preferences, local or family custom, or ethnic or national traditions? How might Jesus judge their effect on heartfelt worship of God?
3. **15:13.** Which religious attitudes and practices did you once hold and now hold no longer? What happened to them? Does their disappearance from your life illustrate this passage, or should you reconsider them?
4. **15:22–27.** What happens to your faith when God appears not to answer? Do you give up, or do you persist?

Chapter 16

For understanding

1. **16:13–20.** What are some of the key concepts and images used in this passage, and what is their Old Testament significance? How did the First Vatican Council view

the importance of this passage?

2. **16:17.** What are some of the parallels between Genesis and Matthew's Gospel in this passage?
3. **16:19.** What is the importance of the metaphor of the keys? What does Peter's authority to bind and loose signify?
4. **Word Study: Peter.** What Greek word translates the Aramaic word *kepha*? What do both words mean? Why is the change of Simon's name to Peter significant, aside from the meaning of the name itself?

For application

1. **16:8–11.** How often do you forget the ways God shows his loving care in your life? How does he remind you of his concern for you?
2. **16:6.** In what ways may your own ideas about Christianity and Catholicism have been influenced by the "leaven" of dissent in the Church? What have you done to heed Jesus' warning?
3. **16:15.** In terms of the practical matters of everyday life, how do you answer Jesus' question to Peter for yourself?
4. **16:24–26.** In what ways has your commitment to Jesus and his Church entailed a denial of yourself? How have you "lost your life" by denying yourself? How does that compare with what you have gained by taking up your cross?

Chapter 17

For understanding

1. **17:1–8.** What is the Old Testament background for the Transfiguration of Jesus? What are the main points of comparison?
2. **17:5.** Whom do Moses and Elijah represent? Why is their presence on the Mount of Transfiguration important?
3. **17:20.** What seems to be the real problem Matthew sees in the "little faith" of the disciples who cannot exorcise the demon?
4. **17:27.** What is the significance of Jesus telling Peter to pay the Temple tax for them both?

For application

1. **17:5.** What do you do to obey the command of the Father to listen to his Son?
2. **17:7–8.** In what ways are you afraid of God? How might looking only at Jesus help you to overcome this fear?
3. **17:19–21.** When have you asked God why you were unable to perform a task you know you have the ability or responsibility to perform? What might too little faith have to do with your inability?
4. **17:24–27.** How generous are you in your financial support of the Church? What is your attitude toward that support?

Chapter 18

For understanding

1. **18:10.** What does this verse have to do with the Catholic belief in guardian angels?

What do angels do?

2. **18:15–20.** Outline Jesus' three-step procedure for Church discipline.
3. **18:18.** Compare this passage with Mt. 16:19. What is the difference between them, in terms of authority? What is the connection between this verse and the priestly power to forgive sins?
4. **18:22.** What does the number Jesus gives (seventy times seven) imply regarding forgiveness of others? How does this number compare and contrast with the number used by Lamech in Genesis 4:24?

For application

1. **18:7–9.** Have you ever knowingly tried to induce someone to sin? What have you done to repair that damage? How close to Jesus' abhorrence to such inducements does your own attitude come?
2. **18:15–17.** How do you handle disagreements or wrongs done to you by others, especially by family? What pattern do you follow? How close to the model presented in this passage is your method of handling problems?
3. **18:21–22.** What are the limits of your own willingness to forgive others? Do you forgive readily, do you wait for the offenders to ask for forgiveness, or do you look on forgiving others as a sign of weakness? What should the limit of your willingness be?
4. **18:23–35.** Multiply your gross annual salary by 20, then multiply that amount by 10,000. Now multiply how much you earn in a single day by 100. Compare the two amounts. The difference between the two figures is comparable to the difference between what the servant owed the king in the parable and what the servant himself was owed by his fellow servant. What does the difference between the two amounts tell you about God's willingness to forgive you and about your willingness to forgive others?

Chapter 19

For understanding

1. **Topical Essay: Jesus on Marriage and Divorce.** How does Jesus' teaching on the permanence of marriage compare with that legislated by Moses in Deuteronomy 24:1–4? Why did God permit divorce and remarriage in the first place?
2. **Topical Essay: Jesus on Marriage and Divorce.** Summarize the three approaches taken by Catholic scholars to clarify the meaning of Jesus' "except for unchastity" clause. How would each view reinforce the Catholic Church's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage?
3. **19:14.** What is the connection between Jesus' blessing of the children and his previous discussion on divorce?
4. **19:28.** What is the meaning of Jesus' promise to the disciples that they will sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel?

For application

1. **19:3–9.** Compare the attitudes toward marriage current in our culture with the attitude of Jesus in these verses. Is your attitude toward marriage more like the culture's or like that of Jesus?
2. **19:10–12.** What is your personal attitude toward celibacy? Do you regard it as an

opportunity to serve the kingdom of heaven or as an impossible burden rendered unnecessary in the modern age? If you are not married, what consideration have you given to a possible vocation to a celibate way of life?

3. **19:21–22.** What does poverty have to do with perfection? What renunciation does Jesus ask of you by way of following him? How has your response been like that of the rich young man?
4. **19:27–30.** When have you asked Jesus the question Peter asks here? How would you react to the answer Jesus gives him?

Chapter 20

For understanding

1. **20:1–16.** Why is God not being unjust to Israel by including Gentiles in the New Covenant?
2. **20:17–19.** What is the main difference between this prediction of the Passion and others in Matthew's Gospel?
3. **20:22.** What is the "cup" to which Jesus refers? How is it fulfilled in reference to the sons of Zebedee?
4. **20:30.** What belief might the title "Son of David" in this passage reflect?

For application

1. **20:1–16.** Using the hours of the day in the parable as an analogy for the time in your life when you first responded to Jesus Christ, where do you think you would fit? The parable talks about what the workers get paid; what is Jesus offering you?
2. **20:11.** When have you ever grumbled at God because of his generosity toward others?
3. **20:21–22.** Have you ever asked God for something, only to realize on hindsight that you did not know the full extent of what you were asking for? What was the request? What happened as a result? What do you now think of the result?
4. **20:25–28.** Considering that the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, why are you here?

Chapter 21

For understanding

1. **21:1–11.** How does Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem recall Solomon's coronation as king of Israel?
2. **21:13.** The selling of animals in the Temple was a service to pilgrims. What was wrong with it? What is the significance of Jesus' quotation from Isaiah 56 as the passage applies to Gentiles?
3. **21:19.** Why did Jesus curse the fig tree?
4. **21:42.** How does Jesus apply Psalm 118 to himself? How else does the New Testament use this psalm?

For application

1. **21:12–13.** Since you are the temple of the Holy Spirit, what "robbers" do you think Jesus wants to drive out?

2. **21:28–32.** Are you more like the first son or like the second one? In what ways?
3. **21:33–43.** How have you responded to people who have tried to evangelize you? If you were offended, what offended you? How much evangelism do you now think you need? Why do you think so?
4. **21:23.** What do you do when you disagree with the exercise of authority in the Church? Do you question it, challenge it, or submit to it? How do you see the authority of Jesus in it?

Chapter 22

For understanding

1. **22:11.** What is the “wedding garment” that the guest has failed to wear?
2. **22:15–22.** What is the malice in the collaboration between Pharisees and Herodians in asking Jesus the question about paying taxes?
3. **22:32.** How does Jesus tailor his answer to the Sadducees and their acceptance of only the first five books of the Hebrew Bible? What conclusions is Jesus drawing from the text?
4. **22:45.** What point is Jesus making to the Pharisees about Psalm 110 that they seem to have missed in their understanding of it?

For application

1. **22:4–5.** Are you a Sunday Christian? In the light of your everyday life, how are you responding to the invitation of God to his feast?
2. **22:21.** How honest are you in paying taxes to the local, state, and federal governments? What excuses do you make to yourself to avoid paying taxes? How generous are you in contributing to the financial support of the Church?
3. **22:37.** What does it mean to you to love God with your whole heart, soul, and mind? What do you do to demonstrate that love?
4. **22:39.** What does it mean to love your neighbor as you do yourself? How do you love yourself? How does that apply to the way you love your neighbor?

Chapter 23

For understanding

1. **23:9.** What does Jesus mean when he tells his disciples and the crowds to “call no man your father on earth”? How does this passage compare with other New Testament passages where the title “father” is used of the apostles themselves?
2. **23:35.** Who are the prophets Jesus alludes to in this passage? How is Jesus comparing his fate to theirs?
3. **23:37.** What Old Testament images does the simile of the hen echo? How does this image apply to the Church’s Magisterium?
4. **23:38.** Look up Ezekiel 10:18 and 11:23. How does Jesus’ departure from the Temple at this point recall Ezekiel’s vision?

For application

1. **23:2–3.** What kind of trust have you placed in your religious teachers? If you are a parent, catechist, or religious teacher, how well do you practice what you preach?

2. **23:12.** What are some stories from your life that illustrate the truth of this passage for yourself? How have you been humbled? What did you learn from these events?
3. **23:16–22.** How often do you use sayings, expressions, or epithets in private conversation to proclaim your honesty, such as “I swear to God”? Why should you avoid these?
4. **23:23–24.** How would Jesus’ condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees in these verses apply to your practice of Catholic devotions? For example, how does scrupulous observance of your favorite devotion compare with how you practice charity to others?

Chapter 24

For understanding

1. **24:1–46.** On what two basic levels is Jesus speaking in this sermon?
2. **Topical essay: End of the World?** In what ways are the Temple and the world linked in the Bible and in ancient Jewish tradition? What does the fate of the Temple have to do with the fate of the cosmos? What does this have to do with the modern Church?
3. **24:15.** What is the “desolating sacrilege” referred to in this verse? How does Jesus use the image?
4. **24:29.** What does the graphic imagery of the falling of the sun, moon, and stars usually refer to in the Old Testament? How does Jesus redirect it?
5. **24:36.** How does Christian tradition understand Jesus’ apparent ignorance of his Second Coming?

For application

1. **24:12.** In your experience, how has the “multiplication of wickedness” in your environment or even in your own life caused your love for God to cool? What can heat it up again?
2. **24:23–26.** What has been your response to invitations to join lifestyles, new (or newly rediscovered) movements, or religious practices that promise peace, serenity, self-fulfillment, or inner harmony but are different from or inconsistent with the Christian message?
3. **24:36–44.** How does the admonition of Jesus to be watchful apply to how you live your life? How might your surroundings be distracting you? What do you need to do to prepare for the Lord’s coming?

Chapter 25

For understanding

1. **25:1–13.** What Jewish marital custom is this parable based on? What moral interpretation do the early Church Fathers (Origen, Hilary) give this parable?
2. **25:26.** Why is the servant who hid the talent dealt with so harshly for his laziness?
3. **25:31–46.** At what two historical levels does the parable of the judgment of the nations operate?
4. **25:40.** Why does Jesus say that by serving others as they do, they serve (or fail to serve) Jesus himself?

For application

1. **25:1–13.** What preparations have you been making for the coming of the Bridegroom?
2. **25:14–30.** How faithful have you been over what God has given you to work with? How might you be hiding your talent?
3. **25:31–40.** Of all the corporal and spiritual works of mercy listed here, which have you done? Which have been the most fruitful for you or others?
4. **25:41–46.** Of all the corporal and spiritual works of mercy listed here, which have you failed to do even though you had opportunity or perhaps even an invitation from God to do them?

Chapter 26*For understanding*

1. **26–29.** What aspects of the Last Supper does Matthew's account highlight? What Old Testament practices or imagery does the account incorporate?
2. **26:39.** Why does Jesus pray to let the chalice of suffering pass him by? How does the Church traditionally view the Gethsemane event?
3. **26:64.** Why does Jesus break his silence before Caiaphas? What is the significance of Jesus' response to Caiaphas as the High Priest?
4. **26:74.** What interpretation do the saints give to the crowing of the cock after Peter's denials?

For application

1. **26:10–13.** What has been your response to persons who seem to "waste" their lives on Jesus (for example, by entering seminaries or convents when they could have married)? When have you "wasted" your own resources on him?
2. **26:30–35.** Have you ever wanted to be a martyr? Why or why not? If you once did and now no longer do, what has changed your mind?
3. **26:39.** How have you handled the major hardships of your state in life? What does resignation to God's will mean to you? How similar to Jesus' obedience is your own?
4. **26:63.** What has been your response to accusation and slander over your practice of your faith? Do you keep silent before your accusers, or do you respond in kind?

Chapter 27*For understanding*

1. **27:8–10.** What is the Old Testament background of the potter's field? What is the geographical focus of the Old Testament passages and their New Testament application?
2. **27:46.** Why, besides the obvious reference to his own suffering in the opening lines, does Jesus quote Psalm 22 from the cross?
3. **27:51.** What is the significance of the rending of the Temple veil?
4. **27:52.** How are we to understand the raising of the saints following Jesus' Resurrection.

For application

1. **27:4–5.** When have you felt stinging remorse over something you did? Was your remorse like that of Judas (without hope) or like that of Peter in 26:75? What has been the result?
2. **27:24.** Pilate's symbolic act has resulted in a proverbial expression: "to wash one's hands" of a matter is to quit responsibility for it. For what situations have you "washed your hands" of responsibility, even though responsibility was placed on you? What did your conscience tell you about that action?
3. **27:25.** Some Christians have (wrongly) used this verse to justify their anti-Semitism. What is your attitude toward Jews and Judaism? How has that attitude changed over the years? How much do you know about the Jewish origins of Christianity?
4. **27:46.** When have you felt abandoned by God? What was the occasion? What effect did it have on your faith?

Chapter 28*For understanding*

1. **28:8.** What kind of event is the Resurrection of Jesus? What event does it anticipate?
2. **Map: Appearances of the Risen Christ.** How many appearances to his disciples did Jesus make as recorded in the New Testament? In round numbers, how many people did Jesus appear to? Why so many?
3. **28:19.** What is Jesus' threefold outline for the Church's mission?
4. **28:20.** In what manner is Jesus with the Church always?

For application

1. **28:9.** If Jesus took the initiative in your life and met you before you sought him, what would be your response? Can you recall such a time? If not, how would you recognize him if he did meet you?
2. **28:19.** What is your experience with evangelizing? What is your attitude toward doing it? What do you think Jesus wants you to do about any fears you may have?
3. **28:20.** How do you recognize the ongoing presence of Jesus in your life? What do you do to encourage his presence there?