

SEAS Advent 2018 Message Series “Go Deeper” Outline for Small Group or Individual Use Advent Week #1 PREPARE THE WAY: The Promise

Groups use this the week of November 26th in preparation for **Sunday, Dec 2 homily. Click on “PREPARE THE WAY” on our website to get the video and homily for the week!*

Weekly Focus: God is someone who keeps his promises: the promise of peace and fulfillment; the promise that suffering is coming to an end. This weekend you are introduced to Metro Mel. Do you? We know the promise of “God-with-us” when we pray, learn and share. All we need to do is witness to Mel. This is our challenge. Will you join us? Will you share the promise with Mel?

GO DEEPER with the VIDEO & HOMILY:

As a group watch the video for Week #1 and refer to the homily attached to this study guide for overall weekly theme and discussion.

Who is Metro Mel? Have someone from your group read aloud the description of “Metro Mel”.

“Mel is a good guy, well educated. He likes his job and his community. Mel is skeptical about what he calls organized religion. He is spiritual, not religious. He believes Jesus is a good guy but doesn't necessarily want to fall into the whole routine. As for church, his parents stopped forcing him and he stopped going. He goes on Christmas Eve and maybe Easter depending on when he can get brunch reservations. What Mel knows about Catholicism is a muddled mess of what he thinks he remembers from religion class, what he hears in the news, and what he saw on The DaVinci Code. Mel's job is demanding and unrelenting, though it's where he finds his greatest satisfaction and affirmation. Mel is over extended in both time and money. He wants the best for his family. Best seems to equal more: more activities, more being added to the schedule such as sports, tutoring, events, and camps. Mel has an incredibly crazy schedule that often involves driving the kids in three different directions. When it comes to the weekend, all he wants to do is relax. Church is not even a consideration. Mel looks pretty good, he looks like he's got it all together, and in some ways he does; but in some pretty important ways he doesn't. He can't do it on his own. He needs a community. He needs a Savior.”

Discussion: Reflect on the “Metro Mels” in your own life. What struck you about this description?

Opening Prayer: Read and reflect on this **Sunday, Dec 2nd First Reading:**

JEREMIAH 33:14-16

The days are coming, says the LORD,
when I will fulfill the promise
I made to the house of Israel and Judah.
In those days, in that time,
I will raise up for David a just shoot ;
he shall do what is right and just in the land.
In those days Judah shall be safe
and Jerusalem shall dwell secure;
this is what they shall call her:
“The LORD our justice.”

- What promises did you hear in this passage?
- What relevance does this have in your own life?
- How could this passage help you to share something of your faith in Jesus with Metro Mel?

Individual Reflection or Discussion Questions:

1. What from the message video or homily stood out to you this week and why?
2. What challenges you about Fr. Mark's message this week and why?
3. In your own words, what has God promised you?
4. *“The value of a promise is directly related to the trustworthiness of the one who makes the promise. God is faithful. He keeps His promises. Even during the long stretches of silence, we have the confidence that God will fulfill what He has promised. In the meantime, we are called to walk in the promise.” -Fr. Mike Schmitz*
 - Is it difficult for you to “walk in the promise”?
 - Why do you think it is hard for Mel to “walk in the promise”?
 - When have you experienced a “long stretch” of silence with God?
5. At St. Elizabeth's the 4th Characteristic of a Disciple is “Witness”: **Growing disciples invite others to grow spiritually. We witness to the goodness and power of the gospels by what we say, how we live, and how we love others.**
 - Do you find it easy to “witness” to people?
 - Who has been a “witness” to you?
6. How might God be calling you to reach out to Mel this week?

Optional Group Reflection (based on time):

- If there is time left, read the following article together and discuss:

"The Promise of Christmas" by Ron Rolheiser, OMI: <http://ronrolheiser.com/the-promise-of-christmas/#.W9n3eZKKhPY>

- If time allows, read together and discuss the following:

"In the Gospels we read time and again that knowing Christ leads to happiness. Jesus himself promised it. I am teaching you about self-giving love, he said, so that your own happiness may be complete and full. Some Christians live like it's always Lent! They forget about Easter. I do realize that some people are suffering greatly, and happiness seems far away for them. But even in these cases, it is possible to live with self-giving love that leads to happiness. Not everything we need and want will ever be provided to us. We should not think that happiness will happen only when everything is in place and "correct" in our lives. In part, this is because our culture is good at providing fleeting experiences of pleasure but is not very able to help people be happy. Nonetheless, I have seen many people, even in the midst of challenging life situations, keep a simple faith alive and allow God to reveal himself. Remember, our faith leads to an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ, and that can happen in any circumstance." -*The Joy of the Gospel Group Reading Guide*

Closing Prayer

Pray together. Begin in silent prayer and then add spontaneous prayers of thanksgiving and petition. Include prayers of intercession for the "Metro Mels" in your lives. Then close with the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, you came to seek and save those who were lost. Break our hearts for those who are far from you. Shape us into people and a parish that will go out of our way to reach them. May the "Mels" in our community come to know Christ because of our prayer and our witness. We pray this through Christ, our Lord. Amen

Supplemental Resources:

"The Promise of Christmas" by Ron Rolheiser, OMI: <http://ronrolheiser.com/the-promise-of-christmas/#.W9n3eZKKhPY>

"The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium", Pope Francis Apostolic Exhortation: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

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"The Joy of the Gospel Reading Guide", Bill Huebsch: <https://www.amazon.com/Joy-Gospel-Reading-Francis-Evangelii/dp/1627850198>