

**1. Read** — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

**2. Meditate** — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

**3. Pray** — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

**4. Contemplate** — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence.

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**How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

# Quick Connect

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## **Gospel Reading—Mark 8:22-30**

*This is the Gospel taken from the Monday of the Third Week in Ordinary Time – Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. Please use the Gospel found on January 22<sup>nd</sup> of each year. If January 22<sup>nd</sup> falls on Sunday, use the Gospel from January 23<sup>rd</sup>.*

The scribes who had come from Jerusalem said of Jesus, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “By the prince of demons he drives out demons.” Summoning them, he began to speak to them in parables, “How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand; that is the end of him. But no one can enter a strong man’s house to plunder his property unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house. Amen, I say to you, all sins and blasphemies that people utter will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an everlasting sin.” For they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

## **Spiritual Reading**

*From Blessed John Paul II; Human Life and the Splendor of Christ*

The teaching of the Church in our day is placed in a social and cultural context which renders it more difficult to understand and yet more urgent and irreplaceable for promoting the true good of men and women. Scientific and technological progress, which contemporary man is continually expanding in his dominion over nature, not only offers the hope of creating a new and better humanity, but also causes ever greater anxiety regarding the future. Some ask themselves if it is a good thing to be alive or if it would be better never to have been born; they doubt therefore if it is right to bring others into life when perhaps they will curse their existence in a cruel world with unforeseeable terrors. Others consider themselves to be the only one for whom the advantages of technology are intended and they exclude others by imposing on them contraceptives or even worse means. Still others imprisoned in a consumer mentality and whose sole concern is to bring about a continual growth of material goods, finish by ceasing to understand, and thus by refusing, the spiritual riches of a new human life. The ultimate reason for these mentalities is the absence in people’s hearts of God, whose

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love alone is stronger than all the world's fears and can conquer them.

Thus an anti-life mentality is born, as can be seen in many current issues...But the Church firmly believes that human life, even if weak and suffering, is always a splendid gift of God's goodness. Against the pessimism and selfishness which cast a shadow over the world, the Church stands for life: In each human life she sees the splendor of that "yes" the "amen," who is Christ himself. To the "no" which assails and afflicts the world, she replies with this living "yes," thus defending the human person and the world from all who plot against and harm life.

The Church is called upon the manifest anew to everyone, with clear and stronger conviction, her will to promote human life by every means and to defend it against all attacks in whatever condition or state of development it is found.

### **Culture of Life: A House Divided - Lesson and Discussion**

*"If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand"*

"A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved -- I do not expect the house to fall -- but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other."

Abraham Lincoln was intentionally quoting Jesus when he delivered this speech. He later said, "I want to use some universally known figure, expressed in simple language as universally known, that it may strike home to the minds of men in order to rouse them to the peril of the times."

Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, speaks simply, truthfully, and His message is universal. It is providential that Abraham Lincoln used today's Gospel years ago when our nation was in "the peril of the times," and is the Gospel used today on the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. **How many kingdoms have been divided? How many kingdoms have fallen because they were divided?**

Our "kingdom", the United States of America, was not united in 1858 and is not united now. In the words of President Lincoln we will become all one thing or all the other. We will become the "culture of death" or the "culture of life". Life is at stake and it is time to "strike home to the minds of men in order to rouse them to the peril of the times."

With the parable that Jesus teaches in today's Gospel, we can see the truths of the current fight for the culture of life. "But no one can enter a strong man's house to plunder his property unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house" If a team wants to win a victory over the opposing team they must stop the best player(s). Once

they defeat (tie up) the player(s) (strong man) they can defeat the team and win the game (house) thus gaining the trophy (property).

In this parable, Satan is the strong man who has taken over the house (a person's soul) and Jesus, who ties him up, is able to free a soul enslaved by sin, giving them a life of Grace. Satan is called the strong man, but it is Jesus who is stronger. The "culture of death" has taken over America and it is only through Jesus and His Church that the culture of death can be tied up and the precious property (life) can be plundered.

**What does plunder mean?** Plunder is to take goods by force as in a war. There is no greater good than life and this is a cultural war. Jesus and His Church are taking back the goods by force, which is the Holy Spirit. He does this through truth and charity; in both works and prayer, joy and suffering. In this pro-life series we learn how precious life has been taken, and what is good is being destroyed. We will also learn how to win the culture war and defeat the "culture of death" thus creating a "culture of life".

We must remember that this is not an issue or a group of issues. Issues come and go. This is a fight for "good". The greatest good is life. Sin is a deprivation of "good" and thus abortion and anything that deprives individuals and the country of "good" is a sin. This packet is not a discussion regarding issues but rather an education in the hope to bring about a greater awareness of sin. If we can become more aware of the things that are depriving us of good, we can then begin to protect, defend, and create good in our hearts, our country, thus creating a culture of life.

Abraham Lincoln presented in 1858 a clear universal truth that united a nation, fought the evil of slavery, and upheld the sacredness of life. This same truth is presented to us today. Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life and His Church which is the "the pillar and foundation of truth." "The Church is called upon the manifest anew to everyone, with clear and stronger conviction, her will to promote human life by every means and to defend it against all attacks in whatever condition or state of development it is found." We are the Body of Christ the Church and we must do our part. May this culture of life packet enable us to do our part and thus may it "strike home to the minds of men in order to rouse them to the peril of the times."