

# What's HARDEST About Being a TEEN TODAY?

## EVERYONE MUDDLES THROUGH MIDDLE SCHOOL

because no one who is 12 or 13 has lived these years and these changes before. No one knows how to do it exactly right.

Brains develop new powers for thinking, waking up

awareness of how others feel and think, challenging us to fit in.

Friends matter in new ways.

Bodies start to change. Some kids grow tall fast, only to be kidded for being monsters.

Some kids with brains wired for big thoughts stay short.

Responsibilities and pressures increase.

*Visions* asked readers from St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Smyrna, Georgia, to identify what they think is hardest about being a teenager today.



## NO TIME

Balancing a schedule is hardest. With my hobbies, school, and homework I barely have time to relax. I

have to stay on the same page as my friends with TV shows and trends. **Kai**



## RESPONSIBILITIES

It's hard to be a teen because you have lots of responsibilities, for example, taking care of your siblings, keeping your grades up, staying in style, and much more. You have to make your parents proud, but not be weird. **Kimbenly**

1 1 million kids under the age of 18 are children of an alcoholic parent.



## PEER PRESSURE

The hardest thing is to stay above the influence. Don't give in to the temptations of your friends. **Brandon**



## RIGHT CHOICES

One hard thing about being a teen is keeping faith. People do a lot of stuff we are not supposed to, like curse. If you don't do it, kids will say you're lame. **Jesus**

More than 20% of children in America live in poverty.



## PEER PRESSURE

Some friends want you to do stuff that you know is wrong and make you feel uncomfortable—like doing drugs or having sex, immoral things. Skipping school is another big thing friends may want you to do. I'm smart enough not to fall into that.

**Evenlyn**

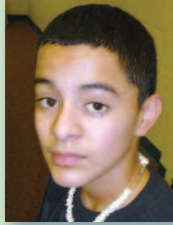


## LEFT OUT

Someone you thought was your friend can suddenly start pestering you to drink, or smoke, or get high. If you give in, you could be suspended, expelled, or sent to juvy. If you don't, they gang up on you, or ruin your reputation, or constantly give you the cold shoulder. If you tell an adult, they despise you for ratting on them. **Kristin**



**EXPECTATIONS** What's hardest? All the rules and expectations. Your parents have rules. There are rules in school and society, too. Teens are expected to go to college when some aren't sure they want to go. *Mineya*



**MONEY** Being a teen is good because you get to make your own money. You can share everything you get and everybody will be happy with you. *Jonathon*

**32% of young people 12-18 years old are involved with bullying at school.**

## 7 P'S FOR RESISTING Peer Pressure

Many of the "hard" things about being a teen today have something to do with peer pressure. Peer pressure can be extremely powerful and hard to resist—but not impossible. When you're feeling negative peer pressure, try one or more of the 7 P's.

- **Plan** ahead. It helps to know where you stand on issues before you encounter them, so think about and discuss "pressure" issues: drugs, sexuality, cheating, friends, faith.

- **Pay** attention to your feelings and beliefs about what is right and wrong. If it feels wrong, it probably is.

- **Pass** up people and situations that put pressure on you.

- **Present** an alternative. "Let's skip the beer party and go to the mall instead."

- **Prohibit** and proceed. Say, "No!" Then go.

- **Put** the blame on your folks. Use a parent or guardian as an out: "My dad will ground me if I smoke."

- **Partner** up. Get help from a friend with similar values. Usually all it takes to stand your ground on what you know is right is for one other peer to join you.



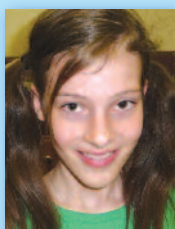
**VIOLENCE** Everybody thinks violence is the solution for a lot of problems. School seems to get harder every year. It's hard to trust your friends. *Iliana*



**FITTING IN** The hardest part is fitting in. A lot of teenagers change their clothes, the way they talk, and the way they act, just to fit in with their peers. They believe that the only way they can have friends is by being someone they are not. *Imani*



**SAYING NO** Teens get involved in teen pregnancy. People offer drugs and it's hard to reject them. Parents make you clean the house and do chores, even when you're tired. School also gets harder and you need help with your work. *Miguel*



**RELATIONSHIPS** People pressure you to have a boyfriend. If you do have a boyfriend they pressure you to kiss him. They just need to worry about themselves. *Faith*

### TALK

1 Which of the responses speaks most to your experience? 2 What's hardest about being responsible for you? 3 Who helps you deal with the pressures you feel? 4 How can you help your friends and peers deal with theirs?

# SUNDAY GOSPEL

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## The Parable of the Renters

**Narrator:** One day Jesus was teaching in the courtyard of the Temple and talking to the chief priests and elders of the people. He told them this parable.

**Jesus:** Once there was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug out a winepress, and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to tenant farmers and went on a journey.

When the grapes were ripe and ready to harvest, the landowner sent servants to get his share. But the renters beat and stoned the servants, and even killed one of them. The landowner sent more servants. The renters did the same things to them.

**Landowner:** I will send my son. The renters will respect him.

**Jesus:** So the son went to collect the grapes.

**First Renter:** Look, here comes the son.

**Second Renter:** Let's kill him. Then we will inherit the vineyard.

**Jesus:** The renters dragged the son outside the vineyard and killed him.

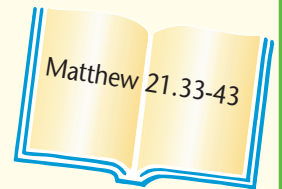
**Narrator:** When Jesus finished the story, he turned to the people who were listening.

**Jesus:** What do you think the owner of the vineyard will do to those renters when he comes back?

**Chief Priests and Elders:** He will kill those evil people and rent the vineyard out to renters who will give him his grapes at harvest time.

**Jesus:** Do you remember what the Scriptures say? "The stone that the builders rejected as worthless has become the cornerstone of the building. God has done this; what a marvelous sight!"

And so I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to people who will produce fruit.



### TALK

- 1 What responsibilities does a renter of a vineyard have?
- 2 What is difficult about being a renter? An owner?
- 3 Why does Jesus tell this parable to the chief priests?
- 4 How does Matthew make this parable like the story of Jesus' life?



**BEING DIFFERENT** The hardest part is having people make fun of you because you are different. I don't like it when people laugh because you like something they don't. *Celia*



### RIGHT CHOICES

Teen pregnancy. Just because they see everybody else do it, doesn't mean they should. *Niamh*



**FAITH** The hardest part is keeping Christ in my life. There are always distractions and peer pressure that pull me away from God. Some people will make mean comments about my religion, but I'm proud of it. *Elizabeth*



**REPUTATION** My friends don't do dangerous things, but they cuss. I am the only one that doesn't. I don't want to tarnish my reputation of never having said a cuss word once. *Alexandria*

### DRAMA

Teenagers have a lot of drama in their lives and not joining in the drama is very hard. It's hard to stay out of being mean and bullying.

*Meredith*

