

we want to be like Jesus, if we want to be Jesus' followers, that is what he is asking us to do.

Think about the times when we have not behaved like Jesus and, knowing he will always be our friend and will always forgive us, we say we are sorry

- for the times we have been unkind by not letting others join in our games. **All: Jesus, we are sorry.**
- for the times we have called people rude or hurtful names. **All: Jesus, we are sorry.**
- for the times we have taken something which is not ours. **All: Jesus, we are sorry.**
- for the times we have broken something that belonged to someone else. **All: Jesus, we are sorry.**
- for the times we have lost our temper or used angry words. **All: Jesus, we are sorry.**
- for the times we have hit our friends. **All: Jesus, we are sorry.**

Now, tell the children that Jesus is asking them to be more like him. He is saying that he loves them very much and he wants them to be happy. We pause for a moment and ask Jesus, who listens to our prayer, to help us to be more like him. **Amen.**

Children can proceed to go to one of the priests.

If you want, you can ask everyone to wait and finish with a hymn.

A liturgy *celebrating forgiveness* (leader's copy)



*A liturgy for young children
based on the story of Zacchaeus*

This liturgy might take place with small groups of children in the classroom or parish room or in a chapel.

Opening Prayer

We offer and receive forgiveness in our families
just as we are going to hear in the story of Zacchaeus —
who experienced the forgiveness of Jesus.

Lord, your love seeks us when we are lost.
Your love invites us to love others.
Forgive us when we fail to love. **Amen.**

Looking at our experience of life

Ask the children to think about a time when they have experienced *forgiveness* at home or at school. It may have been a time when their parents forgave them for being naughty or it may have been a time when they had to forgive someone who hurt them at school. Get them to talk in two's or three's. Then, say, "We all have our stories of forgiveness. Now we will hear a story about forgiving and asking for forgiveness and how Jesus forgave a man called Zacchaeus."

A reading from Luke 19:1-10

In the town of Jericho there was a rich tax collector. His name was Zacchaeus. One day, Jesus visited the town. Zacchaeus wanted very much to see Jesus, but he had a problem. He was very short and could not see over the large crowd gathered around Jesus.

Zacchaeus ran ahead of the crowd. There was a large sycamore tree by the side of the road. Zacchaeus quickly climbed the tree. Then he waited. He knew he would be able to see Jesus as he passed by. When Jesus came to the tree, he stopped. He looked up and saw Zacchaeus sitting in the tree. He called out to him, "Hurry down, Zacchaeus, because I must stay in your house today." Zacchaeus was amazed. Out of all the people there, Jesus had chosen to come to his home. He climbed down from the tree and welcomed Jesus with great joy.

But the people in the crowd were not happy. They did not like tax collectors. Too often tax collectors were dishonest. They cheated the people. They collected more money than the fair amount, and kept the extra for themselves. Zacchaeus was a tax collector and he was rich. The people could not understand why Jesus wanted to be friendly to a man like that.

But Zacchaeus had been changed by Jesus' love. He was sorry for any bad things he had done. He stood up and said: "Listen, sir! I will give half my belongings to the poor and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay him back four times as much." Jesus believed in Zacchaeus. He believed that Zacchaeus could change. By being loving and forgiving, Jesus helped Zacchaeus to grow. He became a better person. And Jesus said, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

(translation adapted from the one used in *Table of the Lord*)

The catechist or priest now gives a homily (or catechesis) on the scripture.

Tell the children that Zacchaeus was a tax collector, a social outcast and no-one liked him. Zacchaeus had heard about Jesus and wanted to see what Jesus looked like. He was a short man; no-one even wanted to stand next to him! So, he climbed a tree; that way he could see and he wasn't next to anyone. Jesus doesn't invite all the good people in the crowd to have a meal with him; no, he invited Zacchaeus. And, because Zacchaeus was touched by Jesus' love, he changes his behaviour and gives half of his possessions to the poor and promises to repay fourfold anyone he has cheated.

In imitating Jesus, we offer love and acceptance to others so that they, too, can believe in God's love for them. There may be children at your school who are not liked for one reason or another — perhaps they are from a different country and they can't speak English, perhaps they don't behave the same way as the other children do. Think about how Jesus would treat them, how he treated Zacchaeus; perhaps if you ask them to play with you, if you get to know them, you might find that you like them. You might find that their behaviour changes now that they have a friend. If