

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Third Sunday of Lent, Year B
3 March 2024
John 2:13-25

Catechist Background

Temple worship in Jerusalem differed from our concept of worship in many significant ways. The Temple in Jerusalem was the 'proper' place to worship God, and Jews would travel there at least three times a year in order to offer sacrifices there. Appropriate sacrificial offerings for different circumstances are described in the Old Testament, especially in the Book of Leviticus, but usually they involved bringing animals or grain to the Temple to be offered to God, and then either burned up or eaten by the priestly class (depending on the occasion). Jews were forbidden to use many of the coins in common currency in the Temple precincts, because these coins bore images of pagan gods or of Roman rulers on them, and thus they were forbidden. (This is because Jews are not allowed to depict humans or God in art – that was considered 'idolatry'). Thus, when Jews arrived at the Temple after long journeys, they found there a market where they could buy their sacrificial animal or offering and also a place where they could exchange all their coins for ones which did not have images on them. Only then could they enter the Temple and offer their sacrifice. This meant that the animal traders and moneychangers in the Temple were able to compete with each other and charge whatever they liked for their services and so there was a great deal of money to be made over their trade. Jesus clearly did not approve of this!

In addition, Jesus echoes the prophet Jeremiah and others when he insists on internal faith and social justice as the marks of being followers of God. By likening his body to the Temple, he indicates that the old system of Judaic worship is to be replaced and true worship of God, of Jesus, is to be restored.

Setting the Scene

Remind the children that it is Lent, a time to grow closer to God, as you enter into your Children's Liturgy space.

We Say Sorry

Lord, Jesus, you call your people to turn away from doing wrong, Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

You teach us wisdom and write your truth in our inmost heart, Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You lead us to the truth, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

We Pray (1)

God, when we are feeling that it is hard to do the right thing, help us to trust in your love. Amen.

Gospel Intro

It may be helpful before the Gospel reading is proclaimed to explain what moneychangers and animal traders were doing in the Temple precincts.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel John 2:13-25

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- What was the Temple meant to be for?
- Do you think it would be easy to pray to God in this church if there were noisy animals outside, which may also be getting loose and running around inside?
- Do you think it would be easy to pray to God in this church if there was a bunch of people shouting how much they would trade your denarii or your drachmas for? [You could use your best market-trader voice to demonstrate.]

Response

Show the children a selection of large-, medium- and small-sized stones. The stones represent things in our lives, with the size of the stones representing how important they are; the largest stone represents God; big stones might represent our family and our friends, being kind to others; the smallest stones might represent toast, ice lollies. Fill a container with small and medium sized stones first, allowing the children to help if possible. When it is full, is there room for a large stone in the container? Of course not! Nobody is saying that toast and ice lollies are BAD, but if they become the focus of our lives, there will be no room for God! Try filling the container with the God-rock first, and then put the other stones in—there will be room for many more stones this way. Put another way, this season of Lent is a time to help us re-order the 'stones' in our lives, by putting God first.

We Believe

Relating to the Creed what you have shared with the children, ask this series of questions and invite the children to reply, 'I do.'

- Do you believe in God, the Father, who created us to worship God?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ, who showers us with saving love?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps us to serve God in our hearts and in our lives?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the Gospel reading by saying, 'Lord, you have given us hearts that want fairness and justice, and so we pray...'

Leader: We pray for the world, that leaders everywhere may act with fairness. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for the Church, that we may serve you not just in our church buildings but every moment we are with somebody. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people who are treated unfairly in any way. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for any of our friends or family who are having a sad time at the moment. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: God, help us to work with you, to follow Jesus' example to make the world a fairer place. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.