

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul
30 June 2024
Matthew 16:13-19

Catechist Background

Today we celebrate one feast for two very important people: Saints Peter and Paul. As such, we are reminded of the different types of people God calls to holiness, and the improbability of what they are called to do. Peter began his time with Jesus as a young impetuous man, who openly if misguidedly cut off a Roman soldier's ear on the eve of Jesus' death but then denied Jesus a few hours later, but Peter grew to be a steadfast leader of a community that underwent huge challenges. Paul and others like him were one of those challenges. Paul was a mature, respectable member of Jewish society, zealous in his application of the Torah, who oversaw the stoning of Stephen. Yet God used Paul, a conservative Jew, to become the most vocal Christian missionary to the Gentiles. By implication, God can use anyone to spread the Gospel, regardless of their background, but they may be required to change their way of operating significantly!

Jesus' gift to Peter of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven and his instruction that what Peter binds and looses (this means 'sets loose') will be bound and loosed in heaven has often been linked only to sin, damnation and authority in the Church. The points below take a wider view of Peter's role, recognising that we can understand 'binding' and 'loosing' as freeing us from sin and binding us to the good for which God has made us.

Setting the Scene

For the activity below, you will need blutack, cut out people shapes (at least one each), and two large items to stick the people to (e.g. hula hoops, whiteboards, large boxes). The 'people' will be stuck to one item to represent bad things that make us feel 'stuck.'

As you gather, say that today is the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. Ask the children to share what they know about these two men. Depending on their age and knowledge, you may want to add more information on these saints. Although they are both very important people, because of time we will focus on today's Gospel reading, which is a conversation between Jesus and Peter. Get them to notice that the colour for the day is red: this is because Peter and Paul were martyrs (people who died for their faith).

We Say Sorry

Leader: Like Peter and Paul, we make mistakes, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You call imperfect people to serve you, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: We are always held in your care, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

God, help us to be true to the teaching of Saint Peter and Saint Paul as we celebrate their lives today. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Matthew 16:13-19

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- Does anyone know what the word 'bind' means? What other things do we talk about being 'bound'? [e.g. books, old fashioned sandals, etc.]
- Sometimes people feel 'stuck' or 'fastened' to bad things. Have you ever felt like you were stuck in a bad mood, or a temper tantrum, or being afraid of something?
- What other bad things can make us stuck?
- What can help you feel un-bound to those things?
- What things is it good to be 'bound' to? [e.g. friends, being kind to others, etc.]
- What helps us to be more attached to doing good?
- St. Peter had difficulties in his life, especially after he became a follower of Jesus.
- Does being bound to God mean that things will always be easy for us?

Response

Jesus gives us the responsibility to help him unbind/unstick people from the negative things in life, and then to bind/stick these people to God. Invite each child in turn to come up and unstick a paper person from the first hoop/box/etc. (perhaps saying 'You are unbound from being cross!' or something similar) as they do so, and then to stick the 'person' to the second hoop/item (perhaps saying, 'You are bound to God's love!').

We Believe

Relating what you have shared with the children to the Creed, ask these questions and invite the children to reply, 'I do!'

- Do you believe in God the Father who has made the world out of love?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who inspired Peter to know who Jesus was and inspires people in our own time?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the Gospel reading by saying, 'St. Peter and St. Paul were bound to you in love and we hope to follow their example as we pray...'

Leader: We pray for all who believe in Jesus, especially when it is difficult for them to see how to spread God's love to others. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people who need to feel God's love. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for good weather for the growing of crops around the world, so that nobody may go hungry. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people in our parish, that they may be generous in using their gifts and talents for others. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, help us to listen like Jesus, so that we can be the answers to others' prayer, as St Peter and St Paul were. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.



