

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year B
10th March 2024
John 3:14-21

Catechist Background

Nicodemus was a Pharisee who came to speak to Jesus at night. In coming to Jesus under cover of darkness, we may assume that he was trying to keep his interest in Jesus private for fear of the social repercussions he would endure. Nicodemus appears twice more in Jesus' story: at one point he dares to suggest that Jesus should have a fair trial. After Jesus' death he, along with Joseph of Arimathea, arranged for his burial. This parallels his journey out of darkness into the light that Jesus speaks of today, first hiding his faith and later making it plain.

Setting the Scene

You may want to illustrate your discussion with simple pictures of a king, subjects, and the king's messenger/son. Stick figures will be fine, with one wearing a large crown (king) and one with a small crown (son), or other identifying markers.

We Say Sorry

Leader: You come to us in light, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You bring us out of the shadows, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You send us to share your love, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

We Pray (1)

God, you bring all the joy into the world. Let us grow in appreciation of your beauty and love as we journey toward Easter. Amen.

Gospel Intro

Before acclaiming the Gospel, ask the children: 'what does God want the world to be like?' and 'how does God want us to treat each other?' 'Is the world always like the way that God planned?' 'Do we always act the way that we should?' No. Today's Gospel looks at this mismatch between what God wants and what our reality is.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel John 3:14-21

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

Show the children the picture of the king and the picture of the royal subjects, and place them on the floor.

- If you were a powerful king (or queen), how would you want your subjects to act?
- If your subjects didn't follow your rules, what might you do? If your subjects were loyal to a different king and not to you, what might you do? Try to encourage the children to see that the 'normal' response in

this situation is to crush any uprising or treason by putting people in prison or sending the military in to crush them.

- Who is the real 'King of the World?' Who did he send to the world?
- From the reading we just heard, why was the Son sent to the world, to crush us or to save us?

Response

God is not a bossy king but a king who loves us more than we can imagine. Some people choose to turn away from God. God does not force them to turn back, but always reaches out to them if they change their minds. Pass a crucifix around for the children to look at, preferably one with the body of the crucified Christ on it (rather than that of the risen Christ). Allow the children to look closely and explain that Jesus' death on the Cross at the hands of ordinary people was a great show of love for the world. Ask 'How much does Jesus love us? This much?' and show your hands spaced a foot apart. Move your hands further and further apart, asking the same question until your hands are as far apart as they can reach. Comment on the similarity of your pose to the body of Jesus on the Cross. Allow the children to stretch their arms and show how much Jesus loves us (making sure they have enough space not to knock into each other, of course).

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 loves the world so much?
- Do you believe in God the Son, Jesus Christ, who was sent to save us?
- Do you believe in the God the Holy Spirit, remains with us now so that we can choose the light?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the Gospel reading by saying, 'Jesus answered Nicodemus' concerns, and so we pray...'

Leader: We pray for the world, especially for places where there is much suffering, that the people who can make a difference to the suffering turn toward the light of God's love. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for Christian leaders, that their behaviour is modelled on Jesus' self-giving love. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for all those who, like Nicodemus, risk being rejected because of their beliefs. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for our friends and families, that they may grow closer to Jesus in this season of Lent. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: God, we know you hear our prayers. Help us to hear your voice in our lives and to trust in your salvation. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

