

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Fifth Sunday of Lent, Year B
17 March 2024
John 12:20-30

Catechist Background

The Greeks (non-Jewish gentiles) came to Jesus' disciples wanting to know more about Jesus. Although the message of Christ primarily was spread to the gentiles after Pentecost and particularly with St. Paul's missions, 'the Greeks' had already shown an interest in Jesus.

Even young children in our society know that plants come from seeds and need time to grow, but that understanding is not universally plain everywhere in the world. Westerners who have tried to 'modernise' traditional hunter-gatherer societies have often run into difficulties in persuading those to whom they are speaking that the seeds are worth looking after although nothing seems to be happening after two days. To hunter-gatherers, it seems like a lost cause, a waste of time and energy. The Christian life can seem like this to us as well! Many times we may wonder if our attempts to follow Jesus are going nowhere. Jesus' first followers must have been comforted by the analogy, particularly in the apparent defeat of Jesus' crucifixion and in the persecution of the early Church.

Setting the Scene

For the activity described below you will need seeds and a large pot filled with soil for the children to plant their seeds into. (Nasturtiums might be good as they are fairly large seeds)

We Say Sorry

Leader: You come for us when we have strayed, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You draw us to yourself, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: Your love conquers all, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

We Pray (1)

God, help us to be like Jesus in all we do and say. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel John 12:20-30

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- What did Jesus want, more than anything else in the world? What was his real purpose/goal? [Encourage the children to see that Jesus was here to save the world, to bring everybody back to God.]
- Do you think some days he might have thought, 'No, I am tired of people pestering me. I'm going to get in big trouble with the authorities and be executed if I don't quit this. Maybe I should stay at home and eat chocolate cake and play video games instead.' Why or why not?

- What do YOU want most for the world? How would you like the world to be? Would that bring glory to God? Remind the children that sometimes we are dismissed from Mass with the words 'Go, glorifying the Lord with your life'. You might ask the celebrant of this Mass to use that form of the Dismissal.
- What might you need to do in order for the world to be like that? For instance, if you wanted the world to be a more generous place, you might need to start by being generous yourself!

Response

Encourage each child to think of one thing that they will do this week to glorify God with their lives, large or small. It might be doing chores cheerfully around the house, looking out for others on the playground, sharing sweets or allowing another child to go first. Give each child the opportunity to come forward and plant a seed in the pot to recognise that following through on what they want to happen may mean making sacrifices, but that our efforts can lead to a happier world where God is worshipped in all activity. Allow each child to say what it is s/he is planning on as s/he plants the seed.

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 is glorified through all creation?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ, who saves the world by his dying and rising?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who sends us out to spread Jesus' love to all?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the Gospel reading:

Leader: We pray for martyrs, for those who lose their lives because of their faith in Jesus. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray that people in all parts of the world will be able to join in eternal life. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for those preparing to be baptised this Easter, that they may be encouraged to die to sin and rise to new life in Jesus. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for members of our parish community who may be feeling troubled about future events in their lives. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: God, we put our lives in the service of you and of other people, to be a part of your rich harvest. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

