

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Fifth Sunday of Lent, Year C
6 April 2025
John 8:1-11

Catechist Background

This week's Gospel reading shows us a real-life example of God's forgiveness as has been explained in parables over the last two weeks. Though this reading is found in John's Gospel, it has much in common with Luke's strong emphasis on sin and mercy towards the weak. Indeed, the reading is unlikely to be an original part of John's Gospel; however, it has hallmarks of an authentic historical event in the life of Jesus.

Not only is this a parable of forgiveness, it prompts us to consider what is justice; presumably if a woman had been caught in the act of adultery, she would not have been caught alone. However, the adulterous man is not present as far as we know and his identity and fate remain a mystery. The Jewish Scriptures did not let him off: according to the Book of Deuteronomy (22:22-29) he too was guilty and should have faced punishment too; but perhaps he escaped, was let off or was dealt with at an other time.

Setting the Scene

For the activity described below, you will need stones (one per child) which are small enough for the children to hold in their hands (but large enough that they will not get lost). Stones slightly smaller than a kiwi fruit would be about right, but please keep an eye on the children to ensure they are not using them dangerously.

We Say Sorry

Leader: You came to teach us how to live, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You show us how to be generous, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You are always ready to show forgiveness, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

We Pray (1)

God, help us to be like Jesus Christ, your Son, who loves us so much he came to save us from all that could harm us. Help us to follow his example. Amen.

Gospel Introduction

Ask the children what they remember from last week's Gospel reading. Explain that this week we will hear a real example of Jesus living out the forgiveness that he taught about, that he will meet a woman who had done something wrong and was about to be killed for it.

It is not necessary for the children to know all the details of what adultery is, but they should understand that the woman involved had done something very serious.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: John 8:1-11

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- The crowd in this story was angry because the woman was caught doing something wrong.
 - How do you feel when you catch somebody doing something they know they shouldn't be doing, whether that be fighting or cheating or anything else?

- How do you feel when people shout at you when you do something you shouldn't do?
- How would you like people to treat you when you do something wrong?
- Acknowledge that we *all* do wrong things in our lives, even when we are grown up.
 - Jesus doesn't like our sinful actions, but he still loves *us*.
- Give each child a stone to hold.
 - How would you feel if you threw this stone at someone else?
 - Would that be a loving thing to do?
 - How would *you* feel if a group of people were getting ready to throw stones at you?

Response

- People do not very often have stones thrown at them nowadays, but sometimes we do hurl nasty words at other people.
- Ask the children to stand with their stones, and close their eyes.
- Ask them to imagine a time they should have shown somebody kindness, but instead said or did something nasty.
- When they are ready, ask the children to put their stones down, to create a centrepiece as a symbol that they will try to act like Jesus in the future.

We Believe

Relate the Creed to what you have shared with the children by asking these questions and inviting the children to reply, 'I do'.

- Do you believe in God, the Father who created the world to be a perfectly happy place?
- Do you believe in Jesus, who came to show us forgiveness?
- Do you believe the Holy Spirit, who can help us to live our lives better?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying: 'Jesus looks after all those who need his help, and so we pray...'

Leader: We pray for wisdom for the Church, that leaders in the Church may always know the right things to say and do. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for the whole world, that every country and person will act with justice. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for all people who are the victims of violence. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for anyone we know who, like the woman in today's Gospel reading, is treated harshly by others. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Loving God, help us to follow you in every way we live our lives. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

