



Catechist Background

Today's Gospel reading comes from a larger conversation on how a community should live together. Immediately before this passage, Jesus discussed the exclusion of those who offended against the community persistently. He focussed on correction and reconciliation to make reunification possible. Due to the passage preceding it and what Jesus told in the parable, we could imply that the 'brother' Peter had in mind had already admitted fault and was asking to be forgiven. When Peter suggested he forgive him seven times, he and the others probably thought that was generous: many rabbis at the time thought three was enough. Through the parable, Jesus showed that the question itself was flawed: the master (God) was owed a huge debt by his servant, impossible for him to pay back (10,000 talents was 10 times the salary of King Herod the Great: one denarius was a labourer's daily wage, and one talent was worth 6,000 denarii). The servant could never have repaid his master even if he sold himself and his family. Our indebtedness to God dwarfs any hurt others could inflict on us. We owe God our very lives, and we have a duty to extend forgiveness to all who truly ask us for it.

We Say Sorry

Leader: Lord Jesus, you came to bring us closer to one another and to the Father, Lord, have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: You forgive us when we ask for your forgiveness, Lord have mercy.

All: **Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: You show us how to be merciful, Lord have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Gloria

We Pray (1)

Lord God, help us to know how to forgive others so that we may live in your peace. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

Reflecting on the Gospel Reading with Children

Say: In today's Gospel reading Peter asks Jesus a question about how many times he should forgive someone, and Jesus gives him an answer that Peter does not expect.

Ask:

- What kind of things do you think someone may have done to Peter to have wronged him?
- Did Jesus mean the number to be taken literally? Would you be able to go about your life and remember 'I have forgiven Jennifer seventy-one times and Kieran thirty-eight times'?
- *If children get stuck on this point, say that we often use big numbers in sentences to make a point (e.g. 'I've told you thousands of times not to do that!')*
- Do you know how much a denarius or a talent of money was worth? *[The second servant would have had to work 100 days to earn the 100 denarii to pay back; the first servant would have had to work over 164,000 years to pay back his debt of 10,000 talents.]*
- Is it fair to expect others to forgive us if we are not forgiving?
- Is it reasonable to expect God to forgive us if we are not forgiving towards other people?

Response

Encourage the children to reflect on the parable through the use of tableaux. For the first one:

- Ask for volunteers to play the first servant and the master (everyone else is onlookers);
- Arrange them in a 'frozen' position with the servant begging the master for his/her life;
- Read verses 23-27 aloud;
- Interview the master and first servant, asking them 'What is your character thinking? What are they hoping for? Why are they doing what they are doing?';

Change the scene, this time with characters for the first and second servant;

- Read verses 28-29 aloud before interviewing those playing the two servants;
- Read verse 30 and ask everyone what they thought about the prison sentence.

For the third scene, keep the same master and:

- Ask for people to play those informing the master of the first servant's actions;
- Then read verse 31 before interviewing the informers;

For the final scene, invite the first servant and the master back.

- Read verse 32-34 and interview the master and first servant again. *If you have time, ask a couple of the onlookers what they thought);*

To close:

- Invite the children to close their eyes and think of a person who they find hard to forgive;
- Encourage them to make a special effort in the coming week to be forgiving to that person.

We Believe

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

- Do you believe in God the Father who created us out of love?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ who brings us back to God's love?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in us when we show God's forgiveness to others?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying 'You show mercy to all who ask for it and so we now pray...'

Leader: We pray for the Church, that we may be a good example of forgiveness. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for people who want revenge, that their hearts be softened. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for people who have been injured or killed by others, and for those who love them.

Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for anyone who has hurt us in the past. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Lord, forgiveness is not easy so please help us to be forgiving. We make our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

