



Catechist Background

It may help to understand the ingenuity in today's parable by looking at its context. Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem for the culmination of his ministry which will ultimately lead to his Crucifixion. The day before he drove out the dealers from the Temple and has returned to the Temple, the centre of Jewish worship, and started teaching to those present. (Imagine someone today preaching in the piazza of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome!) Just before this passage, those in charge of the Temple and Jewish leaders (the Chief Priests and Elders) had just come out and asked who gave Jesus permission/authority to teach there (Matthew 21:23-27) and Jesus responded with today's parable. Some scholars think that today's parable, found only in Matthew's Gospel, may be the basis for the parable of the Prodigal Son, which is found only in Luke's Gospel (15:11-32).

Setting the Scene

For the activity described below, you will need sticky address labels and writing materials.

We Say Sorry

Leader: Lord Jesus, you lead us to the Father, Lord have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: You call us to do your will, Christ have mercy.

All: **Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: You keep calling us back to you, Lord have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Gloria

We Pray (1)

God our Father, you bring us joy by your forgiveness. Help us to be loving with all we meet. Amen

Gospel Intro

It may help the children to explain that Jesus is in Jerusalem, at the Temple (the house where Jews said God lived), and that he was speaking to the Jewish religious leaders who don't like him.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Matthew 21:28-32

Reflecting on the Gospel Reading with Children

Say: In today's Gospel Jesus tells a parable, a story in which the characters represent others;

Ask:

- Who do you think the father represents in the parable? [*God*];
- Who might the sons represent? [*Us*];
- How do you think the religious leaders to whom Jesus was speaking would have reacted to this parable? [*They were probably very cross, but some may have thought carefully about what Jesus said and tried to change their ways as a result*];
- Have you ever acted like the first brother? [*reassure them that we often want to say 'no' immediately when God asks us to do something different to what we had planned to do*];
- Have you ever acted like the second brother? [*reassure them that we all have, probably*];
- Which would be the better way to act? [*to say 'no' but then to do what God asks*];
- Which would be the best way to act? [*to say yes, and then to do what God asks*].

Response

- Give each child a sticky label (or two depending on the size of the labels);
- Encourage them to write 'Yes to Jesus!' on them, and then stick them on themselves;
- As they work, discuss how we can say yes to Jesus, not just with words but with our actions.

If the children are very young, it would be better to have prepared the words on these beforehand, and then allow the children to decorate them before sticking them on themselves.

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 is full of love and generosity?
- Do you believe in God the Son, Jesus, who shows us how to be active followers of God?
- Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit, who gives us strength to be who God wants us to be?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying 'We are God's children and so we bring our prayers to God...'

Leader: We pray for the Church, that we may continue the work of Jesus. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for leaders, that they keep their promises to act kindly. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for our parish, especially for anyone who feels that someone has not treated them well. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for anyone who is ill, and those who care for them. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Lord, we know you hear our prayers. Help us to be the answer to someone else's prayer. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.
All: **Amen.**

