

Children's liturgy – Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)

Preparation of the worship space

Colour: Green

Props: Coloured pens and pencils. A toy sheep, or number of sheep, or cotton wool stuck on sheep-shaped cards and a coin.

Song suggestions: All are welcome (458, Laudate)
Gather us in (475, Laudate)

Welcome: It is Education Sunday today, a special day when we give thanks for all who work so hard to make our schools places of welcome and learning for all. And in today's reading Jesus tells us three stories to show us how God welcomes us, loves us and forgives us all. Let's think a bit about what this can mean for our lives at home and at school.

Opening prayer: Forgiving God, so often we get distracted by things and are too busy to put you first. Yet you never stop loving us, and so we thank you for never giving up on us. Amen.

First reading (optional): Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14

Psalm: Psalm 50:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19. R. Lk 15:18

Gospel acclamation: everyone stands and sings the acclamation together. Suggestions include: 'Halle, halle, halle' (Caribbean) from 'Sing With the World', Alison Adam & John Bell; 'Alleluia' (Zimbabwe), Abraham Maraire Publications, WCC & GIA; 'Celtic Alleluia' (traditional); 'Alleluia! Raise the Gospel' from 'Go Before Us', Bernadette Farrell, OCP Publications.

Gospel: Luke 15:1-32

Gospel reflection: What do you remember from today's reading?

Have you ever lost something valuable? How did you feel when you lost it, what did you do to try to find it? Did you manage to find it, if so how did you feel?

In the reading we heard, why do you think the shepherd was so concerned when he lost one sheep out of a hundred and the woman with losing one coin out of ten?

Even though it was only one sheep or one coin, it was still very important and valuable to the person who had lost it.

What did the shepherd do with the lost sheep when he found it? How did his actions show he loved the sheep? Who do you think the shepherd in Jesus's story is meant to be? And who are the sheep?

Jesus is our shepherd, and we, his followers, are the sheep.

In the same way as in the stories, all people are valuable to God. Why do you think each one of us is valuable to God?

We are all different. We are all special. God cares for us and loves us. God wants us to do what is right. But sometimes we do not listen, we are not very generous, and we can be mean to others, or we do other things we know are wrong. At these times we're a bit like the sheep or the coin that is lost, because we are turning away from God.

But this doesn't mean that God loves and cares for us any less. God cares for us and watches over us always. And when we see that we have done something wrong, when we ask for forgiveness and turn back to God, God is happy and welcomes us back and celebrates because we are no longer lost.

In Jesus's last story today we heard about a father's forgiveness for his son. Although the son went far away and wasted the father's money, he realised he had done something wrong and he came back to his father, asking for forgiveness. How did the father feel when his son came home? What did he do for his son?

So what do the three stories we've heard today show us about God's love and forgiveness? And on Education Sunday what do you think they mean for how we should treat other people, particularly at school?

School should be a place where everyone feels welcome. Where everyone's special gifts and talents are recognised and where everyone can come to learn, be safe, and feel happy.

Our school community can also look outwards – seeing how we can spread God's love and mercy to others. How do you think we can share God's love with one another both at school and outside school?

Perhaps this week, you can try to do what is right and to share God's love for everyone with all the people that you meet, particularly those people who are new in school or who seem lonely.

How will you do this in the coming week?

Intercessions *You may want to ask the children to offer their own prayers or you can use the suggestions below.*

God loves us all and so we pray together...

We pray for all teachers, support staff and others working in schools: that they may be an example of Christ's love and create a welcoming place for all students, especially anyone who is new to the school this year. Lord, in your mercy...

We pray for all school pupils: that they may always try to do their best, listen well, and use their talents to help one another. Lord, in your mercy...

We pray for our brothers and sisters in every country: that we may not turn away anyone who comes to us for help and that we may welcome everyone in our communities. Lord in your mercy...

We pray for our parish, family and friends: that we may be loving and forgiving towards all people. Lord in your mercy...

Closing prayer: God of lost sheep, coins and all people, help us to remember you are with us in love and forgiveness every day. Guide us to share your love with others through our actions. Amen.

Activity suggestions

Ask the children to colour in the accompanying illustration and on the back to write or draw what they will do in the coming week to share God's love with other people at school or at home.

Ask the children to act out one of the characters in the stories that Jesus tells. Make sure they end with either finding the sheep or coin and some words to show their happiness. Or end with the father of the two sons showing forgiveness and love.

Ask the children to write a short prayer about love and forgiveness and then all say them one at a time or in pairs to each other.

Ask the children to go home and share all that they have heard and thought about today. Ask them to do one thing to share God's love for everyone with others. If they have written a prayer ask them to say this together with others at home during the week.

More resources to reflect on Education Sunday with the children are available from the [Catholic Education Service](#).