

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C
11 September, 2016
Luke 15:1-10

Catechist Background

The full gospel reading for today is quite long (Luke 15:1-32), including the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. This trio of parables share an obvious theme about God's mercy and dedication in seeking us when we are lost. The Pharisees and scribes who were Jesus' original audience for these parables would not have seen themselves as 'lost.' Yet they were lost in a different way, like the son who stayed with the father in the story of the prodigal son, having lost the capacity to enjoy the goodness of God's unending love. For those of us who have heard the stories many times, the outcome is unsurprising, but it could be startling for first-time hearers. Many people would argue that it is not sensible to leave ninety-nine sheep to look for one who is lost; many parents whose child has wandered away for even a short time in a shopping centre welcome them back (not with a party but with a sharp telling off!) Yet the gospel tells us that God's relentless love ensures there is more rejoicing over one who is found than over ninety-nine who never left.

The Lectionary for Masses with Children uses only the parable of the Prodigal Son as its reading today. The materials below use the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin, as does the shorter form of the gospel in the 'adult' Liturgy of the Word. The Prodigal Son was also the gospel for the Fourth Sunday of Lent this year.

Setting the Scene

For the activity below, each child will need a circle-shaped piece of paper with the words 'I am lost' on one side and 'I am found' on the other. They will also need drawing materials.

We Say Sorry

Leader: Lord Jesus, 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.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

God our Father, help us to know that your happy forgiveness is for us as well as for others. Help us to serve you with our whole hearts. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Luke 15:1-10

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- Have you ever been lost? What does it feel like to be lost?
- What does it feel like to be found?
- Have you ever lost something that was really important to you, like a special teddy? What was that like?
- If it was found, how did you feel afterward? Did you feel like throwing a party? Or at least having a special cuddle with it?
- What sort of things make people 'lost' from God?
- What does today's reading tell us about God's response when people turn back to God?
- How should we respond when we know people who do not act as they should?

Response

Give each child a circle of paper described in 'Setting the Scene' (above). Invite older children to draw something that they might do that makes them 'lost' in God's eyes on the 'I am lost' side, and draw a scene of them being forgiven on the 'I am found' side. Younger children will find it easier to draw a sad face to show how they feel when they are lost, and a happy face to show how they feel when they are found. You may wish to let the children tape the drawings to themselves before they go back into the main liturgy, making sure the 'I am found' side is showing.

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 almighty creator of us all, who rejoices when we are found?
- Do you believe in Jesus, who came to save the lost?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us to reach out to those around us and lovingly welcome them?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the reading by saying, 'God wants us to remember those who need our help, and so we also now pray...'

Leader: We pray for leaders in our Church, that they may always grow in understanding of what Jesus asks of us. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for the whole world, that people who need help will be looked after in all countries. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people whose lives are hurting from terrorism and war and violence. We also pray for people who are tempted to use violence to get their way. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people we know who are having a difficult time at the moment.
We especially pray for anybody who had a tricky time as they started school last week.
Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, help us to make the world a more forgiving place by giving us the strength and the courage to forgive those around us. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

