

Liturgy of the Word with Children
27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C
2 October, 2016
Luke 17:5-10

Catechist Background

The Children's Lectionary gives a very shortened version of today's gospel and you may want to use the full gospel passage. Today's gospel provides two fairly preposterous images for us to contemplate. First we have something (faith) the size of a notably small seed uprooting a tree with an extensive root system and planting it in the unlikely location of the sea. This is probably not meant to be taken literally, as Jesus did not himself perform absurd miracles like a magician, but to emphasise that the apostles' faith, though small, would grow like a seed and be sufficient for the tasks they were challenged to do (in the verses immediately preceding today's gospel, Jesus instructs his followers to forgive each other seven times a day, i.e. infinitely).

The second part of the gospel emphasises that faith is a gift, not a right that we can demand of God. The apostles are rebuked for seeming to view their following of Jesus as a transactional affair: we are following you and so now you owe us something. (In today's second reading—2Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14—Paul also reminds us of the concept of gifts.)

It is important to note that Jesus does not say that God is *like* the demanding master in the second humorous vignette, but rather that our attitude should be like that of the servant he describes. The phrase 'merely servants' is sometimes also translated 'unprofitable servants' or 'servants who are owed nothing.' As we are human and God is God, we are indeed owed nothing. Increased faith or any other divine gifts are not something we earn. We shouldn't approach God with an attitude of 'What's in it for me?' Furthermore, God's servants can't quit! We will always belong to God.

Penitential Rite

Leader: You bring us to your truth, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You are our guide, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You always free us to love you, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

God, forgive us when we make wrong choices and lead us in your way of peace. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Luke 17:5-10

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- Did anyone think the stories in today's gospel were a bit funny? What was funny about them?
- Who here has faith? Have you ever been able to plant a tree in the sea? Do you think that Jesus *wanted* his followers to plant trees in the sea? What do you think he might have meant?
- Have you ever had asked a question (or heard someone ask) 'Can I have a treat for just doing what I was supposed to do?' That's not really the point of a treat, is it!
- What is it that we are 'supposed to do' as Christians?

Response

In the gospel, Jesus speaks about faith the size of a mustard seed. If you are able, provide some mustard seeds for the children to see their size. Explain how something so small can grow into something quite large! The plant Jesus referred to may have grown up to 2.5 metres in height. In a similar way, Abraham was the father of a huge nation. Great things can have small beginnings. We should be grateful for the opportunities we are given to spread God's love to the world, not looking for a reward.

Introduce the following game: Everyone will stand, motionless around the room, like frozen statues. Only when someone shakes their hand, smiles and says 'Hello!' can they move. When your hand has been shaken, you may then go and greet others and shake their hand. Begin play by everyone 'freezing' except the leader, who can begin shaking hands when all are ready.

After a few moments of play, everyone will be unstuck. Ask how many people at the very beginning of the game could move. (Only one—the leader.) And how many could move at the end? (All!) When do things in our world seem a bit stuck? How many people need to begin to start getting them unstuck? (Again—only one—each of us!) What does it feel like when we are 'stuck' in our lives? How does it feel when someone comes to help us get unstuck? When you began getting people unstuck in the game, did you want to continue helping people? So it is with faith—when we live out our faith, it grows.

You may wish to tell the children that we will hear more about gratitude next week.

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 Father almighty?
- Do you believe in Jesus, who came from heaven to save us?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who helps us to live as Jesus taught us?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the reading by saying, 'We know and so we also now pray...'

Leader: We pray for the leaders of the Church. May their faith help them to do their jobs well. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for leaders of this country. May they lead wisely. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people who have jobs where they serve others. May they feel appreciated and valued for their service. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for anybody we know who is feeling stuck in their lives in any way. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, help us to live as you taught and spread your joy and love to those around us. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

