

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Fifth Sunday of Lent, Year A
2 April 2017
John 11:3-7, 20-27, 33-45

Catechist Background

Over the past two weeks we have seen embodied in the gospel Jesus as the Living Water, and Jesus as the Light of the World. Here we can reflect on Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life. In these three weeks of Lent we see him bringing faith, light and, now, life.

More is known about Lazarus than the blind man we heard of last week. Most likely from an influential family, he and his sisters, Martha and Mary, were friends of Jesus, whom they welcomed to their home in the village of Bethany, a little under two miles from Jerusalem. There Jesus often stayed when visiting Jerusalem. Jesus was not there, however, when Lazarus died some days before the Passover. Once he heard the news of Lazarus' death he went to be with his friends. John's account describes a typical Jewish burial. Wrapped in linen strips, Lazarus' body was buried the same day he died; his tomb a cave, sealed with a stone, outside the village. His sisters, Martha and Mary then began the customary 30 days of mourning at home, receiving the condolences of their friends and neighbours. By the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been dead for four days.

Setting the Scene

Ask the children to think about how, in nature, things appear to die but, then, they return to a new life again. Say how daffodils die away but the bulb remains. If you plant the bulb, it will come to life again next Spring. Some of our trees appear to die in the autumn; but they, too, come back to life in the springtime. Fruit trees give us their fruit year after year. We can rely on that happening. It is the same for other things. Talk to them about tadpoles that die to their old life and come to a new life as frogs, and caterpillars that come to new life as butterflies.

We Say Sorry

Lord, by water and the Spirit you give us new life,

All: Lord, have mercy.

Christ, by the cross you brought pardon and hope,

All: Christ, have mercy.

Lord, by your death you brought peace and forgiveness,

All: Lord, have mercy.

We Pray (1)

God, help us to listen to your word so that we may see your glory. Amen.

Gospel Intro

In today's Gospel, Martha and Mary send an urgent message to Jesus saying that their brother Lazarus was very ill and they were afraid he would die. They wanted Jesus to come and cure him. At that time, if you wanted to send someone a message, you had to send a person to deliver it. There were no cars or trains; there was no e-mail, no mobile phones – not even ordinary telephones or post! So sending a message took time. By the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been dead for four days. In those days, when a person died, his body was wrapped with cloths. Jesus was very sad that Lazarus had

died and he cried. Martha and Mary believed that Jesus was the Messiah, though, and they believed that he could bring their brother back from the dead.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel : John 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

Invite the children to say what they heard in the story.

Ask how do they think Martha felt when she saw Jesus coming. What did she say? How did Jesus answer her? Remind them of the conversation between Jesus and Martha and between Jesus and Mary.

Talk about how Jesus was filled with pity, emphasise the compassion of Jesus.

Ask them what the story might help us to understand about Jesus. Talk a little about the Christian belief in life after death, telling them that even after we die we will continue to live with God in a new and different way. We don't understand much about this new life but we know we will be happy because we will live with God.

Response

You might produce cards with the words 'I am the Resurrection and the Life'. On the reverse of the card ask them to write or draw something they will do this week that is compassionate and caring, just as Jesus showed compassion to Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

We Believe

In our creed, we say what we believe. Invite the children to think about what they are saying when they say the creed.

Ask this series of questions and invite the children to reply, "I do":

- Do you believe that God in God, our loving Father?
- Do you believe that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who helps us to understand what God is like?
- Do you believe in our holy, catholic church, where we come to learn about God?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the reading by saying, 'You gave new life to Lazarus, and so we pray...'

Leader: We pray for Christian leaders, that they may always respond to people's needs. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for the world, that we think more about it and all its resources, we pray for help to take better care of it. Lord in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for all those who are sick and for all those who have died, we pray that they will find their home with you. Lord in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for our friends and families, that they may grow closer to Jesus in this season of Lent. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: God, we know you hear our prayers. Help us to hear your voice in our lives and to trust in your salvation. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

