

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Pentecost, Year A
4 June 2017
John 20:19-23

Catechist Background

Today's gospel should have a familiar ring to it as it formed part of the gospel reading on the Second Sunday of Easter.

In the languages that the apostles spoke and the cultures that they lived in, the concepts of 'sin' and 'peace' have different connotations than they do in modern English. 'Sin' in John's Gospel is about failure to recognise Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God sent to redeem the world. He would have struggled with the concept of the 'shopping list model' we sometimes encounter when thinking of sins (stealing, cheating, lying, coveting, murder, etc.) Similarly, our coupling of 'peace' with 'quiet tranquillity' is found nowhere in the scriptures. The first century world was a crowded, noisy place. The Hebrew concept of 'Shalom' encompasses the rightness of a situation when you do not have to make anything up to any person or to God. It means being debt-free in the widest possible sense. Jesus has made the ultimate atonement for us and for our sin (failure to recognise him), and we are free to experience shalom.

We Say Sorry

Leader: You come to us in light, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You bring us out of the shadows, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You send us to share your love, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

Lord God, may the Holy Spirit you sent after Jesus' resurrection continue to guide us today. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel John 20:19-23

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- When you think of the word 'peace,' what do you think of? Explain, using child-friendly language, the understanding of the early Christians was different to our understanding. It is possible to experience this sort of peace at a noisy birthday party!
- What do you think people mean when they use the word sin? Again, using child-friendly language, explain that the first believers thought of not recognising Jesus as the only sin. Other things we call sins sometimes resulted from not fully grasping Jesus' message. For instance, if I did not remember that Jesus loves the person who is annoying me, I might reach out and punch them. Understanding and remembering what Jesus really taught can stop me from doing things we call 'sins' in English today.

- Why did Jesus breathe on his followers? What did he ask them to do?

Response

Jesus asked his followers to go out and spread his peace by forgiving sin. Do you think there would be more peace if there was more forgiveness? Of course! If we are people who forgive others, there will be more peace. Remind the children of Thomas a few weeks ago, who was given Jesus' peace even though he did not believe at first. Remind the children also of the readings we have heard more recently that tell us that Jesus came to give us life in its fullness. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we can pass that peace and fullness of life to others as Jesus asks us to.

In Greek, the language that John's gospel was written in, the word for 'Spirit' and 'breath' is 'nooma' (or 'pneuma'). If you have space, invite the children to take up positions as frozen statues. Instruct the children that when someone whispers 'nooma' in their ear, they can become unfrozen and whisper 'nooma' into someone else's ear to unfreeze them. Soon the whole room should be unfrozen. Tell the children that when they go back to their homes today, they can tell their families what 'nooma' means and whisper it to them. If you have time, play again.

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, Alleluia, Alleluia!'

- Do you believe in God the Father who sent his Son to save us?
- Do you believe in Jesus, God the Son, who sends his friends out to continue his work?
- Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit, who has been with Jesus' followers since the first Pentecost and is with us today?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the reading by saying, 'You send out your friends to look with concern on the world, and so we pray...'

Leader: We pray for missionaries everywhere, that they may be filled with courage as they are sent forth to tell others about you. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for the whole world, that everyone may come to know about your saving love. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for those who are feeling weighed down by any bad feelings they have, that they may know your forgiveness and love. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for our families and our friendship groups, that they may be places of kindness and generosity. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, fill us with your Holy Spirit so that we may faithfully show your healing love to the world. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

