

Liturgy of the Word with Children
24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
16 September 2018
Mark 8:27-35

Catechist Background

This week's gospel illustrates a turning point in Mark's description of Jesus. Before this point, about halfway through his gospel, Mark has shown Jesus to be a powerful prophet; after this episode, Jesus is shown to be the Messiah ('Christ' in Greek) and all which that entails. He no longer will speak in parables only, but will teach his disciples directly.

The Jews at the time anticipated a socio-political messiah in the lineage and manner of David, who would unite the Kingdom of Israel and kick out the foreign rulers (i.e. the Romans). When Peter testified that Jesus was the Christ, he had in mind a powerful deliverer appointed by God (with the emphasis on 'powerful'). The 'rebuking' Peter and Jesus do to each other when Jesus insists that it is his mission to suffer grievously is a serious affair; it is the same word used to describe how Jesus' casts demons out of the possessed. Jesus, however, resists the temptation to be merely a nationalistic leader, and insists on a greater type of salvation that comes from his death and resurrection.

We know with post-Easter understanding that Jesus very literally picked up his cross on his journey. However, the Greek word for cross ('stauros') had a double meaning. It could also mean the branding that cattle were marked with to show who they belonged to. It is poignant to remember that tattoos in tribal cultures all over the world are used to denote who one belongs to, the gods one worships and significant moments in person's life. When we 'pick up our cross,' we also pick up that which marks us out as Christ's: our fidelity to God's love.

Setting the Scene

It may be useful to have seen some images of tribal tattoos; a quick internet search can provide numerous examples. You may feel it is appropriate to bring some to show the children as well.

For the activity described below, you will need a bowl of holy water.

We Say Sorry

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

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You lead us to understanding of your truth, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: Show us your continuing love, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

God, help us to know your love and forgiveness, and help us to serve you with our lives. Amen.

Gospel Introduction

It may be helpful to remind the children of last week's gospel, possibly by asking them if they remember what we heard about. This week we have an example of someone whose ears were opened in a different way, in Peter. Explain that life was very difficult for Jewish people in Jesus' day and that they were looking for someone to free them from their rulers; the title they gave the expected leader was 'Messiah' or 'Christ.'

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Mark 8:27-35

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- Why was Peter disappointed when Jesus said that he was going to suffer and die? If you were expecting a leader to free you from some mean rulers, how do you think that person would behave?
- What do we think of when we hear Jesus say that we should pick up our cross and follow him?

Response

Explain to children that the word 'stauros' has two meanings: cross and branding mark (just as, coincidentally, cross in English has two meanings: a tool of crucifixion and expressing anger/annoyance!)

Our 'tattoos' that we wear to show we are God's children are not the kind that come from making marks on our skin. Our souls are marked by our baptism and we remind ourselves of this whenever we make the sign of the cross. People should know we are Christian because of the actions that we show to each other, rather than the marks on our skin. Encourage each child to dip their fingers in the holy water and make the sign of cross to bless themselves, as a reminder that we belong to God and will follow God's ways.

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 who has marked our hearts and souls with Love?
- Do you believe in Jesus the Christ, the saviour who frees us from the sin of the world and invites us to follow him?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who seals us with God's grace?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the reading by saying, 'We know you are alongside us and so we bring you our prayers...'

Leader: We pray for Christians all over the world, especially in places where it is dangerous to believe in Jesus. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for leaders in government, that they use their lawmaking powers to make the world a better place. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people who do not know what it is like to be loved by others. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for anyone we know who is struggling at school or at home. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, you told Peter and your friends that you would need to suffer for the sake of others. Help us to see how we can give our lives generously for you by serving others. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

