

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul
Matthew 16:13-19

Catechist Background

In celebrating Saint Peter and Saint Paul on the same day, we are given a reminder of the variety of types of people who are called to holiness, and the improbability of what they are called to do. Peter begins his journey with Jesus as an impetuous young man, who enthusiastically if misguidedly cuts off a Roman soldier's ear on the eve of Jesus' death and then denies him within a space of hours; Peter grows into being a steadfast leader of a community that undergoes tremendous challenges. Paul and people of his ilk are one of those challenges. He is old enough to be a respectable member of Jewish society and zealous in his application of the Torah, overseeing the stoning of Stephen. Yet God uses this conservative Jew to become the most vociferous missionary to the Gentiles. By implication, God can use anybody to spread the gospel, regardless of their background, but they may be required to change their *modus operandi* quite significantly!

Jesus' gift to Peter of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven and subsequent instruction that whatever Peter binds and looses will be bound and loosed in heaven has been often linked exclusively to sin and damnation and authority in the Church. The questions below take wider view of Peter's role, and recognise that 'binding' and 'loosing' can be applied in terms of freeing us from our sin in order to bind us to the good that God has made us for.

Setting the Scene

For the activity described below, you will need cutout shapes of 'people' (at least one per person), blu-tak, and two large items to stick the people to (these could be hula hoops, whiteboards, large boxes, cardboard tubes etc). All the 'people' should be stuck to one of the items, which will represent bad things that make us feel 'stuck.'

As you gather, mention that today is the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. Ask the children to share what they know about these two men. Dependent on their age and experience, you may want to fill out their knowledge with some other information on these important saints. Although they are both very important people, because of time we will be focusing on the gospel reading today, which is about a conversation between Jesus and Peter.

We Say Sorry

Leader: Lord Jesus, you have shown us the way to the Father, Lord have mercy

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You have given us the truth, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You give us yourself as our guide, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

God, help us to be true to the teaching of Saint Peter and Saint Paul as we joyfully celebrate their lives today. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Matthew 16:13-19

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- Does anyone know what the word 'bind' means? What other things do we talk about being 'bound'? [e.g. books, old fashioned sandals, etc.]
- Sometimes people feel 'stuck' or 'fastened' to bad things—have you ever felt like you were stuck in a bad mood? Or having a temper tantrum? Or being afraid of something? What other bad things can make us stuck? What can help you feel un-bound to those things?
- What things is it good to be 'bound' to? [e.g. our friends, being kind to others, etc.] What helps us to be more attached to doing good?
- St. Peter had difficulties in his life, especially after he became a follower of Jesus. Does being bound to God mean that things will always be easy for us?

Response

Jesus gives us the responsibility to help him unbind/unstick people from the negative things in life, and to bind/stick them to God. Invite each child in turn to come up and unstick a paper person from the first hoop/box/etc. (perhaps saying 'You are unbound from badness!' or something similar as they do so) and stick the 'person' to the second hoop/box/etc. (perhaps stating, 'You are bound to God's love!').

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 made the world out of love?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who inspired Peter to know who Jesus was and inspires people in our own time?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the reading by saying, 'St. Peter and St. Paul were bound to you in love and we hope to follow in their example as we pray...'

Leader: We pray for all who believe in Jesus, especially when it is difficult for them to see how to spread God's love to others. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people around the world who need to feel God's love. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for good weather for the growing of crops around the world, so that nobody may go hungry. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people in our parish, that they may be generous in using their gifts and talents for others. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, help us to listen to what you would have us do, so that we may be the answer to someone else's prayer, as St. Peter and St. Paul were. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

