

Liturgy of the Word with Children
2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
15 January, 2023
John 1:29-34

Catechist Background

This week's gospel revisits John the Baptist's recognition of Jesus, but from another gospel writer's perspective. St. John does not recall Jesus' actual baptism, but John the Baptist's understanding of him afterwards. In ancient times, having someone to 'witness' was a bit like having a character reference. The more prestigious the witness or witnesses, the more revered the one being endorsed would be. John the Baptist not only puts himself forward as a witness, but assures hearers that God is behind his certainty, as 'the one' who sent him to baptise told him so.

The appearance of the title of the Lamb of God and the dove resting on Jesus calls to mind rites described in the Old Testament. Jesus' crucifixion at Passover identifies him as the ultimate Passover lamb. As the original Passover brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, so Jesus saves us from our slavery to sin. Additionally, sheep and doves were used in burnt offerings in an acknowledgement of God's lordship, and in purification offerings to restore ritual purification to items or people which/who had been made profane, often by blood or death. Jesus' life, death and resurrection points to these events also (i.e. the acknowledgement of God's lordship and the restoration of holiness to humanity).

Setting the Scene

For the activity described below you will need 'dove' shapes and colouring/decorating materials. (You may be able to find line drawings on the internet)

Ask the children what they remember from last week's gospel, as this week continues many of the same themes.

We Say Sorry

Before listening to the Scriptures, full of God's love, let us take a moment or two to recall that we do not always live in a way that is worthy of that love.

You came to show us how to live in peace, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

You came to call us back to God, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

You are the Lamb of God, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

Father of heaven and earth, hear our prayers and show us the way to peace in the world. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: John 1:29-34

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- What did John the Baptist say that he saw resting on Jesus?
- Can you think of any other stories in the Bible that have doves in them? (Some children may remember that Noah sent out a dove to see if there was dry land after the flood.) What sorts of things do doves make us think of? (Hopefully someone will answer 'Peace'.)
- What did John the Baptist call Jesus at the end of the gospel reading? Why do you think he called him that?

Response

Give each child a shape of dove to cut out – or have them cut out in advance. As they decorate their shapes, continue an informal chat about how the Holy Spirit is with each one of us. When everyone is finished, hold the children's doves above their heads one at a time in a representation of the gospel description. (*Internet a good resource for dove shapes!*)

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 of all humanity?
- Do you believe in God the Son, Jesus, the Chosen One of God?
- Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit, who rested on Jesus at his baptism and who has rested on us in ours?

We Pray (2)

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

We pray for all who prepare people to be baptised, that they may themselves be faithful and loving. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

We pray for people who make important decisions about businesses and companies. May they act fairly and kindly. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

We pray for people who live in countries where they are in danger. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

We pray for anyone we know who needs our prayers. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Lord, you gave John the Baptist the wisdom to see who Jesus truly was. Give us the wisdom to live well in our world today. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

