

Liturgy of the Word with Children
5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
5 February, 2023
Matthew 5:13-16

Catechist Background

Although the price of salt doesn't feature in the news today, in the ancient world it was an essential commodity. It was used in food preparation, not only for flavour but, more crucially, to preserve fish and meat. A still more important use for salt was in oven fuel. Girls would be sent out to collect dung to use as fuel, which was then mixed with salt to act as a catalyst. The Hebrew and Aramaic words for 'earth/ground' and 'earthen oven' are the same—so in calling us the salt of the earth, Jesus clearly calls us to be catalysts in our world.

Jesus is speaking in Galilee on a mountain. Hill cities and the inability to hide them would be very familiar to his audience. So would lamps to light one-room houses, and the absurdity of lighting one only to cover it up with a basket.

Setting the Scene

For the activity described below, each child will need a paper representation of a candle. The dextrous leader will be able to make a cylinder 'candle' out of an A4 piece of paper. If you then cut a paper 'flame' out of orange paper with a long piece at the bottom to tuck into the cylinder, the 'candle' can later be 'lit.'

We Say Sorry

You came to teach us how to live, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

You show us how to be generous, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

You are always ready to show forgiveness, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

Lord, watch over us and keep us safe every day. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Matthew 5:13-16

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- What was salt used for in ancient times? (Children will probably be unfamiliar with its use other than to make food tastier, and may need explaining on this point. They may giggle if they realise that dung is essentially 'poo', and that is okay. The leader can draw out that just as salt could be mixed with something that was a bit disgusting and made into something useful, we can transform the not-so-nice things in our world too.)

- Jesus didn't REALLY mean that we are actually physically salt. What did he mean?
- What did Jesus mean when he said that we are the light of the world? In what ways can we light our world?

Response

Give each child a paper candle to write their name and/or draw their faces on. Discuss how, in a world without electricity, how comical it would be to light a candle at night and then cover it up.

It is important to raise the profile of the last twelve words of the gospel, 'So that they may give the praise to your Father in heaven.' In a society where celebrities are praised for being, well, famous, it is crucial that children—and adults—recognise that the point of our good works and the point of our shining light is to glorify God, not to illustrate how fabulous *we* are.

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 Creator of the universe?
- Do you believe in Jesus the Saviour of all?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who inspires us today?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the reading by saying, 'God asks us to begin to change our world and so we now pray...'

We pray for Pope Francis. May he shine Christ's love to the world through all he does.
Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

We pray for presidents and prime ministers and world leaders that they may make decisions that lead to people praising God. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

We pray for people who live without heating and light and all the good things that they provide. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

We pray for people who we know who are feeling a bit rubbish for any reason lately.
Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Lord, help us to see how we can shine the light you give us to brighten up the world we live in. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

