

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Third Sunday of Lent, Year A
12 March 2023
John 4:5-15,19-26,39-42

Catechist Background

During the Assyrian occupation most of the inhabitants of Israel had been carried off into exile. Some remained behind and mingled with people who had been brought in from other places by the Assyrians. From this time they became known as Samaritans. When the Jews who returned to their homeland after the Babylonian Exile they would not accept their help in building the Second Temple of Jerusalem. Consequently, in the 4th century BC the Samaritans built their own temple in Nablus, at the base of Mount Gerizim, in the present-day West Bank.

The Jews regarded the Samaritans as foreigners, racially impure and religiously compromised. Normally, Jewish travellers made a detour around Samaria to avoid contact with Samaritans, but Jesus took the direct route. He came to Sychar, which was a town near Jacob's Well. The woman was carrying a pail, a bucket, for drawing water. She was astonished that a Jew should ask her for a drink of water, a thing that Jews would not do

Setting the Scene

Ask the children if they have ever been really thirsty; or if they have ever been without water for some reason. Ask them if they have ever seen stories on the news of floods. Although there is water everywhere – in the rain and in the floods – people are worried about having enough safe drinking water. People can get very sick if they drink dirty water. Remind them how important water is, how we need water to live (to drink, to wash, to cook) and how animals and plants need water too. Whenever we hear of people who need water, we try to help them.

It might be helpful to have a poster or picture to help the children visualise a very dry, desert land.

Place a bowl of water at your focal point, ready for later

We Say Sorry

Lord, by water and the Spirit you give us new life,

All: Lord, have mercy.

Christ, by the cross you brought pardon and hope,

All: Christ, have mercy.

Lord, by your death you brought peace and forgiveness,

All: Lord, have mercy.

We Pray (1)

God, help us to listen to your word so that we may see your glory. Amen.

Gospel Intro

Remind the children that last week we heard about Jesus being changed in the sight of the disciples. This week we hear about how Jesus changes the life of one woman.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel : John 4:5-15,19-26,39-42

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

Remind the children of the difficulties between Jews and Samaritans that some may have heard of when talking about the parable of the Good Samaritan. You might simply make the point that the Jews saw the Samaritans as foreigners who were not like them and who did not worship God like them, so would normally avoid them. Point out how Jesus, in speaking to a Samaritan woman was doing something very unexpectedly.

- Ask the children to visualise the Gospel; what might Jesus look like,
- Imagine Jesus, hot and tired, sitting down to rest at the well.
- How did the woman collect her water?
- What did Jesus say to her?
- What did she answer?
- What kind of water was the woman talking about?
- What did Jesus mean by living water?

Gradually help the children to see the relationship between living water and baptism. We were baptised in living water and entered a new life in Jesus, and we will have eternal life.

Response

Ask the children if they know when they were baptised. Most of them will have been baptised as babies; but, more and more today, children are a little older and some of them will remember their baptism – or they may have seen a child being baptised. Explain that the holy water at the entrance to the church is a symbol of the water used for baptism. When we make the sign of the cross with it we are reminding ourselves that we are baptised Christians. Invite the children to come forward to the bowl of water and make the sign of the cross with it on their foreheads.

Many parishes also have adults too who are asking for baptism and the adults, and perhaps some children, will be baptised, at Easter time. We, too, are invited to renew our baptismal promises at Easter time. If you have people preparing to be baptised in the parish tell the children about them and ask them to pray for them.

If they know of anyone who is preparing to be baptised, you might suggest that they befriend them. Of course, it is not just people who need water or who are preparing for baptism who need help, who need us to befriend them. Ask the children if they can think of other people who are in need, who need our help and to decide, in their hearts, if someone they can help this week.

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, who gives us the water we need to live in the world?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ, who gives us living water, the new life of baptism?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps us to understand?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the reading by saying, 'You gave to the Samaritan woman all she needed, and so we pray...'

For the Church – the community of faith – for its leaders and teachers, for all the baptised, that we will hear your word and will for us.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For the present, the past and the future, we pray that your kingdom of love will come in every place and in every heart, bringing the healing and hope that you alone can give.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For all those who are sick and for all those who have died, we pray that they will find their home with you

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

In the stillness of our hearts, let us speak to our God, who listens to us and who wants us to know he loves us ...

