

**Liturgy of the Word with Children**  
**Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time- Year A**  
**10 September 2023**  
**Matthew 18:15-20**

### **Catechist Background**

In today's gospel Jesus talks to his disciples about the responsibility they have as individuals and as community to help each other to live as God wants us to live. In this passage also, Jesus assures the disciples of his presence with them when even two or three are gathered to pray in his name. It is in prayer that we gain the strength to face the challenges of showing our love and care for others in the way Jesus describes.

### **Setting the Scene**

For the activity described below you will need to prepare a list of situations of bad behaviour that children might experience – 'Problems'. Write each one on a slip of paper and place in a bag or box.

### **We Say Sorry**

Leader: You give us all that we need, Lord have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: You forgive us when we stray, Christ have mercy.

**All: Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: You promise to be with us always, Lord have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

### **Gloria**

### **We Pray (1)**

God, you teach us to reach out to others. Help us to live as you want us to live. Amen.

### **Gospel Acclamation**

**Gospel:** Matthew 18:15-20

*In today's Gospel Jesus tells us how we can help the community to grow by being able to help each other to live as God wants us to live.*

### **Reflecting on the readings with the children:**

- What does Jesus say we should do first if we know that one of our friends is doing something wrong?
- What does he tell us to do next if that doesn't work?
- What should we then do?
- How will Jesus help us in this task?

When Jesus spoke to the disciples it was maybe at a time when some of them had noticed others who were not behaving as God would want them to. Perhaps they had asked Jesus to do something and he was trying to help them to take on the responsibility themselves.

If we love people and really want the best for them we need to be strong enough to help them to do the right thing. Real friendship and Christian love includes helping each other even when it is difficult.

Sometimes we realise that we cannot do it on our own so Jesus suggests that maybe one or two others might help. Maybe your friend does not believe that he or she has done anything wrong and it takes others to convince him or her.

Sometimes even that may fail and we can go further for help, maybe in school we could ask for help from our teacher, or at home from our parents. However we deal with the situation maybe it is important that we first say a prayer to Jesus to help us to show our love and our care for our friend in whatever we do. In our Gospel today Jesus tells us that when we pray in his name, even two or three of us, he will be there – to guide us and support us.

- Have you ever done something wrong and been told about it by your friend?
- How did you feel?
- Why do you think your friend talked to you about it?
- Have you ever felt you should say something to your friend when you know they have done wrong?
- Was it easy or difficult to do?
- Why might it have been difficult?
- What might happen if we don't tell our friends when they have done wrong?

### **Response**

Have your 'Problems' in a bag or box. Ask a child to draw out one slip from the box and read it out.

Ask for suggestions as to how one might help one's friend to do better – 'Solutions'.

With younger children you might also have some written solutions that the children could be asked to comment on.

Draw from the children some thoughts on how our behaviour affects the whole community, thus illustrating why the community has a responsibility to help people to correct their behaviour.

Some, in this first week back at school might have been asked to agree on some rules of behaviour in the classroom. This could also be brought in as an indication of the need for support, respect and care for each other.

### **We believe:**

Relating the Creed to what you have shared with the children, ask this series of questions and invite the children to reply, "I do", i.e.:

- Do you believe that God created us to be like him ?
- Do you believe that Jesus teaches us to live as God wants us to?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who gives us the strength to live as God wishes?
- Do you believe in our holy, catholic Church, where we come to learn about God?

## **We pray (2):**

Again relating the bidding prayers to what you have shared with the children, propose some bidding prayers, i.e., Jesus has said he is with us always as we pray, so we pray

Leader: For the Church: that we may continue the work of your son Jesus  
Lord, in your mercy

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: For the spirit of love in our hearts, that we will become more loving  
with our families and with our friends, Lord, in your mercy

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: For a deeper understanding of the many ways in which God is with  
us, Lord, in your mercy

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: For all those who are suffering from illness, that they may be  
healed, Lord, in your mercy

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: For all those who have died; and we think of their loved ones, who  
miss them, Lord, in your mercy

**All: Hear our prayer.**

