

**Liturgy of the Word with Children**  
**6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B**  
**11<sup>th</sup> February 2024**  
**Mark 1:40-45**

### **Catechist Background**

Recently we have heard about Jesus' power to cast out evil spirits; for the next few weeks we will hear about his power to heal people from infirmities that the Jews of his day believed were caused by sin. At that time, many skin diseases that caused a lack of integrity in a person's skin were called leprosy, and even houses could be said to be afflicted by leprosy and torn down. The problem with a leper was not that s/he was contagious, but that s/he was 'unclean.' The 'leper' who met Jesus quite possibly had a condition like eczema, which did not make him ill but made him socially isolated, a dreadful fate in the ancient Mediterranean world because it meant no one would help, speak to or protect him.

It is hard for us to imagine what such a life would entail: being unable to be near others, unable to work, unable to join in family life or celebrations or worship. It was therefore totally against the rules of society for the leper to approach Jesus. Jesus' response of stretching out his hand and touching the man broke the rules too, and he risked being ostracised himself by doing so, as uncleanness was 'catching' even if the skin complaint was not. Perhaps it was for this reason Jesus ordered him not to tell anyone but the temple priests (they were the ones who had the authority to declare him 'clean' and allow him back into society). Perhaps it was so that Jesus' reputation as a healer would not spread at the expense of his preaching. Either way, the man ignored Jesus' order and told people about how Jesus healed him.

### **Setting the Scene**

You will need a rope to make a circle on the floor for the activity described below. Masking tape could alternatively be used.

### **We Say Sorry**

Leader: Lord Jesus, you healed the sick, Lord, have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: Lord Jesus, you forgave sinners, Christ, have mercy.

**All: Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: Lord Jesus, you gave yourself to heal us and bring us strength, Lord, have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

### **Gloria**

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

God, help us to live our lives with an awareness of your love. Help us in all that we do. Amen.

**Gospel Intro:** It may help the children to understand a bit about the isolation of 'leprosy' in Jesus' day before hearing the Gospel.

### **Gospel Acclamation**

**Gospel:** Mark 1:40-45

## Reflecting on the Reading with Children

Before asking the children anything about the Gospel reading, arrange a rope circle on the floor. Invite all of the children to sit together inside the rope circle. Point out that you are all TOGETHER inside the circle. Ask for a volunteer (preferably one who is sufficiently mature to be able to cope with being temporarily excluded for the purposes of a demonstration. If your group has only very young children, an adult could fulfil the role).

Tell the volunteer that s/he is not allowed in the circle, and like the leper in the story, s/he is not allowed to talk to anyone else and nobody is allowed to talk to him/her. Tell a few jokes or have a nice amiable chat with those inside the circle. After a few minutes, ask the person outside the circle:

- What does it feel like to be outside the circle with the rest of us inside?
- [to all the children] How do you think the leper felt?
- Are there people who are sometimes left out nowadays?
- Do you ever feel left out? What can make you feel not left out anymore?

## Response

Invite the one who was 'left out' to re-join inside the circle. As s/he joins back in, say the words, 'You always belong with Jesus,' and draw a cross on his/her hand with your finger. Take turns for each child to step outside the circle and come back in. The child who has previously been excluded and has re-joined should trace the cross on the next person's hand, if s/he is able. If your liturgy group is very young, an adult may do all the tracing.

## 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 made all things out of love?
- Do you believe in God the Son, Jesus, who welcomes all people back to God?
- Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit, who is present with us today?

## We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the reading by saying, 'You have the power to heal people's bodies and their hearts and so we pray for those in need...'

Leader: We pray for the Church, that we remember to look out for people who don't really belong. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for the leaders of our country, that they may make rules so that all people can join in ordinary life. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for all people in the world who are left out because they are poor, because they are ill, because they are too old or too young, because they have done wrong in the past, or because of any other reason. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for anyone we know who is feeling lonely. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Lord, help us to be friends with all people. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

