

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year B
5 May 2024
John 15: 9-17

Catechist Background

This week's Gospel reading is a continuation of the Last Supper discourse that we heard from last week. John was writing at a time when some believers in Jesus thought the key to salvation was a special knowledge (or 'gnosis'). These believers were/are referred to as "Gnostics". Some of what is written in John's Gospel can be seen to refute the claims of the Gnostics, hence his emphasis on love being the litmus test of the followers of Jesus.

However, 'love' is a word that comes with much cultural baggage in today's world; some of what is referred to as love is actually self-interest or manipulation or simply a cosy feeling. These understandings of 'love' are unrelated to the scriptural concept of Love. In the ancient Greek words in which John's Gospel was originally written, it is clear that the love that Jesus speaks of is not a feeling, but actions, and more specifically, these are the actions of people who are committed to the good of each other. Therefore Jesus can say that the greatest love is to lay down one's life - as he did - for his friends. Real, true love cannot be compromised and cannot be used as a weapon against others, to get them to do what we want them to do; such use is non-loving in itself. It is may be easier for some people to grasp the idea of true friendship as a self-giving, non-manipulative form of relationship than to think of it as 'love.'

Setting the Scene

For the activity described below you will need paper for each person and writing/drawing materials.

We Say Sorry

Leader: Lord Jesus, You show us how to love, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You choose us to bear fruit, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You show us the way to the Father, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

God, help us to celebrate joyfully your love for us by showing loving friendship toward others. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation To highlight the significance of the Easter season, you may choose to sing 'Alleluia' after the completion of the Gospel reading as well as at the beginning.

Gospel: John 15: 9-17

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- How do you know if somebody is your friend? How do you know somebody loves you?

- If someone says they are your friend but they are always bossy and mean to you and never want to play what you want to play, are they really your friend?
- What can we do to show people that we love them? What can we do to show people that we are their friend?
- How do we know that God loves us? What things has God done for us to show that we are friends?

Response

Invite each child to trace around his/her hand on a piece of paper. On their hands, the children should write/draw things that they do to show their love/friendship toward others. For older children, you might encourage them to write one thing on each finger, for instance, on their thumbs, what they do to show that they love God; on their index finger, what they do to show their families that they love them; on their tall finger, their friends; on their ring finger, their classmates; on their little finger, anyone else. You may wish to cut the hands out and make a poster to process into the main body of the church.

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, Alleluia, Alleluia!'

- Do you believe in God the Father and creator of Love?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ, God the Son, sent out of Love for us and all people?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, urging us to show Love and friendship to each other in our world today?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayer to the Gospel reading by saying, 'Your love encompasses all people, and so we pray for others...'

Leader: We pray for all Christians who have a difficult time remembering that God loves them. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for leaders of countries, that they make laws that are fair and helpful to those who are in need. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people who have any sort of disability. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for our friends, that they may know that we love them and that they may know that God loves them. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, help us to show our love for each other by mirroring your love for us. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

