

Faith Map

Resources for children based on the
Sunday readings

Year B

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proper 6

1. Introduction to the theme of the day

“The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed”

Aim: To think about what Jesus was trying to tell us about God’s kingdom.

Leader’s Reflection: The parables can become so familiar to us that we think we know immediately what they are trying to teach us. Today we spend some time looking more closely at the parable of the mustard seed, to see what we might have missed.

2. We arrive

We sit in a circle ready to listen to the Gospel.

Has anyone anything they would like to tell us about last week’s Family Sheet?

Focus

A lighted candle, green fabric for ordinary time, mustard seeds, large shrub or branch held upright in a pot.

Gospel: Mark 4:26-34

Read from the Lectionary or Children’s Lectionary.

3. We respond

What is the Gospel asking of us?

Jesus often spoke in parables; he used the things which were around him to try and explain what God was like. But Jesus lived in the first century, and we live in the twenty-first century, so sometimes we need to work a little bit harder to try and find out what he was really trying to say.

Work in age groups if appropriate, but join together as a community at the end of the session.



Young ones

Story

The mustard tree gave a great sigh. She was lonely. It hadn't been like this when she was little; then she had been surrounded by all the other plants her own size. They had a great time together, swaying in the wind, and splashing raindrops at each other. But now she had grown up ... and up ... and up. She was far taller than any of the other plants in the garden. She could hear them still chittering and chattering down in the shade below, but she was too high up now to join in.

It wasn't all bad. Now that she was tall and so very strong, the birds loved to come and sit in her branches and groom her leaves with their beaks. She couldn't understand what they were saying, but they tickled her and made her giggle. And she did get the views. She could see sights that the plants below her never even dreamed of. Even so, it wasn't much fun being on her own. She sighed.

Just then a man came over the hill with his friends: they were talking together.

"Tell us about the kingdom of God," one of them said. The mustard tree listened carefully – the kingdom of God – now she had heard of that, and often wondered about it. It was supposed to be a wonderful place, where

everybody was kind and there was room for everybody, and nobody was ever lonely.

"Well," said the man, looking round him, "the kingdom of God is like ... is like ... a mustard tree!" The tree could hardly believe her ears. How could she be like the kingdom of God, stuck up here with no one to talk to?

"The kingdom of God is like a mustard tree," explained the man, waving in her direction, "because it grows so quickly that it is bigger and taller than all the other plants, and it can be seen from a long way off, and it gives shade to the plants that grow underneath, and there is room in it for all the birds to come and make their nests." And then the man and his friends moved on. The mustard tree was stunned. The kingdom of God! She was like the kingdom of God! It was true all the things that the man had said. She did grow quickly, and she was the biggest and tallest, and she could see a long way, and the plants did grow in her shade, and the birds did nest in her branches. The kingdom of God! Fancy that! She rustled her leaves and stood up a little bit taller. The kingdom of God! Now that was really something.

Talk with the children about the meaning behind the imagery used in this story.

Juniors

Perhaps have some mustard seeds ready to show the children.

Some facts about the mustard seed:

The horticultural name is *sinapis* and they are part of the brassica family (the same as cabbages, sprouts and broccoli). In the Holy Land three different varieties of mustard are found – *sinapis arvensis* (field mustard), *sinapis alba* (white mustard) and *sinapis nigra* (cultivated mustard). The first two of these are very common weeds, and all three have very tiny seeds. Mustard plants are annuals – they need to be sown each year. Once sown, they grow very easily, even in the most inhospitable places, in nooks and crannies, and even on stony ground, wherever there is a bit of moisture and something for their roots to hold on to. They grow extraordinarily quickly. They soon outstrip all the other common herbs,

and cultivated mustard can grow to be as tall as 3–4 metres, a tall shrub rather than a tree by British standards, but much taller than some Mediterranean trees. Their stalks ripen into "branches" which make great perches for the birds that are attracted by the mustard seeds. Once the tree has flowered, they are often covered by small flocks, pecking away at the pods. Once they are harvested and dried, mustard seeds are full of flavour, and are used in lots of Middle Eastern recipes.

Allow the children to have a taste from a little pot of mustard.

4. Activity

Young ones

Draw a mustard tree on a large sheet of paper, or bring in a large shrub or branch held upright in a pot. Children can stick or hang photos or pictures of themselves in its branches. Talk to them about the significance of doing this.

Juniors

Have a look again at the Gospel story. Jesus says that the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. Read the description of the mustard seed carefully. Try and work out in how many different ways it is like the kingdom of God (use the chart from the template page). Why did Jesus use the mustard seed for his parable?

Tips for learning difficulties

Use the tree made by the young ones. Label the ways in which it is like the kingdom of God.

5. We come together

Parents can be invited to join in at this stage.

Focus

Gather around the candle and the “mustard tree”.

Gospel

Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. It is the smallest of all the seeds, but once it is sown, it grows into the biggest shrub of them all, and the birds come and rest in its branches.”

Prayer

Jesus, you used the things around you to try and teach us about God. Thank you for making things easier to understand. When we look at the things around us, help us to see what they can tell us about God. Amen.

Share

The children can show the work they have been doing.

Sing

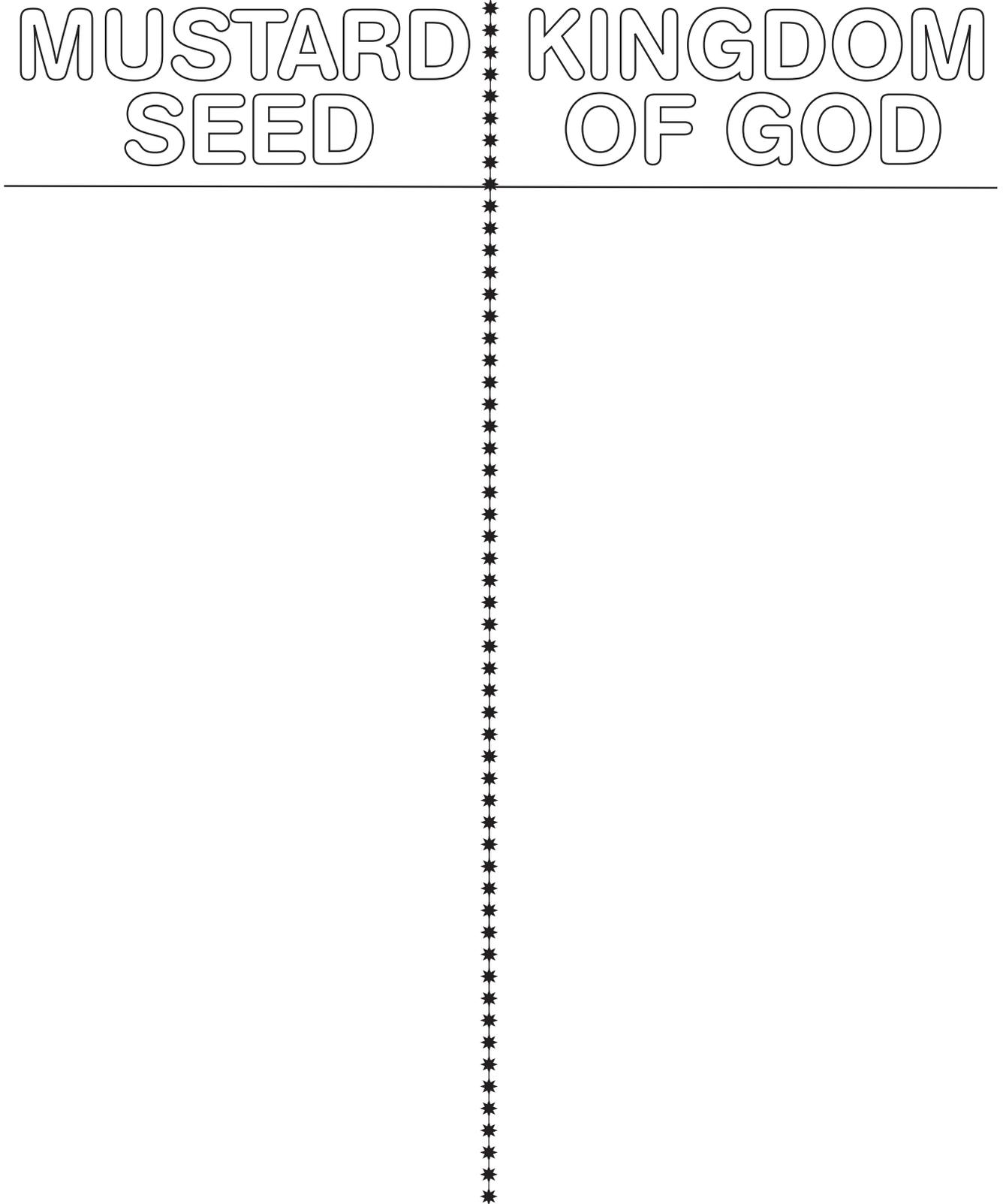
“He gave me eyes so I could see”
“All things bright and beautiful”



How is a mustard seed like the Kingdom of God?

MUSTARD
SEED

KINGDOM
OF GOD



12th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proper 7

1. Introduction to the theme of the day

“Even the wind and the sea obey him”

Aim: To think a little more of the historical Jesus, to locate him in a physical environment.

Leader's Reflection: There are very few references in the Bible to the weather, and when it is mentioned it is usually as a vehicle for some forthcoming event – “it was hot, and Jesus was thirsty” or as a manifestation of God's presence: the storm of Jonah, the quiet breeze of Elijah. If it were all located in the British Isles, it might be a very different story!

2. We arrive

We sit in a circle ready to listen to the Gospel.

Has anyone anything they would like to tell us about last week's Family Sheet?

Focus

A lighted candle, green fabric for ordinary time, protective weather gear: waterproofs, wellies, hat etc.

Gospel: Mark 4:35-41

Read from the Lectionary or Children's Lectionary.

3. We respond

What is the Gospel asking of us?

This is a version of the Gospel story set somewhere in the British Isles, for both young ones and juniors.

Work in age groups, if appropriate, for the activities but join together as a community at the end of the session.



Young ones and Juniors

Story

Peter stared gloomily out of the window of the fisherman's hut where they had all spent the night, cooped up in the muggy darkness. Raining again. None of them had slept very well in these cramped conditions, and now Jesus was insisting they get out the boats and cross to the other side of the lake. A storm was brewing, he could see that – he hadn't spent twenty years on the lake in all weathers without learning to recognise the signs – but the Master was the Master, seemed to think he knew what he was talking about.

The oilskins were hanging behind the door. Peter shivered, still damp from yesterday's excursion. Really, you had to hand it to the man, all those people standing on the hillside in the pouring rain just to hear what he had to say. Even under all his gear Peter had felt cold and miserable and he had been glad when Jesus had finally decided he had had enough. The whole village would be down with the flu at this rate!

He called to James and Andrew to give him a hand. They were feeling stiff and grumpy too, but barely raised an eyebrow when Peter explained what Jesus wanted. Reckoned they could handle themselves in any weather, that pair!

Oh well, best get on.

Two hours later Peter was feeling a bit more cheerful, the weak sunshine had warmed him up a bit, and it was always good to be out on the waters and moving. Jesus, bless him, after getting them all going, had promptly fallen asleep at the back of the boat. He was a useless sailor anyway, so he was probably best off out of the way back there; their very own holy mascot!

Oops, what was that? The waves were slapping a bit harder at the stern now. Peter grinned to himself: that might wake the man up! But no, Jesus slept right on – quite oblivious. Peter, on the other hand, was suddenly very alert. He had been right to rig the boat up ready for a gale and now it was going to need his full attention. He shouted orders to the others who were already busy trimming the sails and laying out the sea anchors. This looked like it could be a big one.

The storm, when it arrived, was like nothing they had experienced, and they were very experienced. At first they tried to make a bit of headway, but that quickly became dangerous; the wind screamed around them and threatened to rip the sails, so they yanked them down, threw over the anchors and tried to ride it out instead. The boat was tossed about by each wave smashing against them; water poured in, and they were blinded and deafened by the torrential rain. Soon each man was clinging to the boat for dear life, praying for the strength to hold on when the capsize, which seemed inevitable, finally happened. Only Peter, yelling out curses to the wind, the rain, and whoever else happened to be listening, tried to keep some sort of control. But in the end even he gave up. They were all going to drown.

"Jesus!" Peter suddenly remembered. He was probably already thrown overboard. Wind roaring in his ears, and rain scouring his face, Peter dragged himself hand over hand down to the back of the boat. "Jesus!" Thank God, he was still there. "Jesus!" Peter screamed into the wind. Nothing seemed to stir him. Groaning with the effort, Peter dragged himself that extra yard. He shook the man roughly. Jesus woke instantly. "What is it?"

"What is it?" Peter was beside himself with anger and worry. "What is it?" Couldn't he see what it was?

"Quiet now," Jesus said, "be calm."

Peter could never quite explain what happened next. By the time they reached the shore, the sun was shining again and everything was calm. James and Andrew were congratulating themselves on their ship-handling skills whilst Jesus was calmly talking about his plans to visit Nazareth next week. Only Peter sat in the stern of the boat, his mouth still dropped open with astonishment. It had happened. He looked at his little boat, battered and torn from the storm. It had happened. Even the wind and the sea had obeyed him.

4. Activity

Young ones

Re-enact the story. An upturned table makes a great boat, with a broom and curtain for a sail. Don't forget a cushion for Jesus to sleep on in the stern.

Juniors

You are going to present the weather forecast and news report for Lake Galilee on the day of the storm. You will need a large map of Lake Galilee copied from an atlas. The lake is roughly egg-shaped with the blunt end in the north. Capernaum is on the northern shore where it is likely that Jesus embarked. Nazareth is to the west of the lake, a bit further inland. Use the weather symbols on the template sheet to help your presentation. Refer to the story and report in your own words.

Tips for learning difficulties

One child could be assistant to the "weather presenter" and stick the symbols onto the chart. Colour code these with corresponding dots on the back and the place on the chart.

5. We come together

Parents can be invited to join in at this stage.

Focus

Gather around the candle, and protective clothing.

Gospel

Jesus was in a boat with his friends. He was very tired, and had just settled down for a nap at the back of the boat when a great storm blew up. Jesus' friends were very frightened and thought they were going to be shipwrecked, so they woke him up, but Jesus just looked at the wind and the sea. "Quieten down!" he said. And the wind settled and the sea became calm again.

Prayer

Jesus, we thank you for being our friend. You have done great things for us. Help us, Jesus, to recognise you in the world around us. Amen.

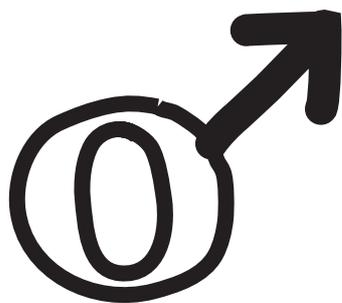
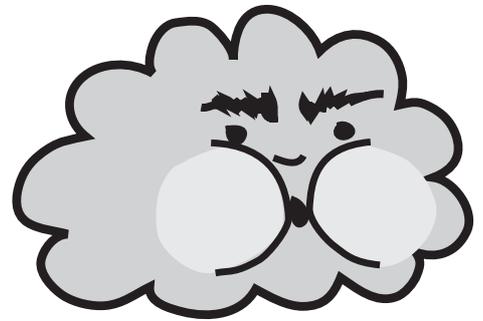
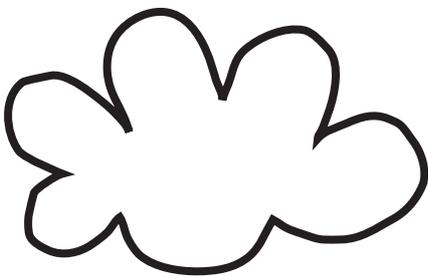
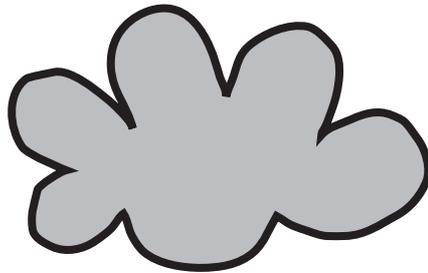
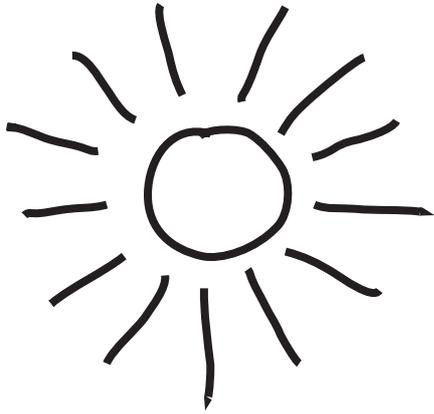
Share

Juniors can present their "broadcasts" to everybody.

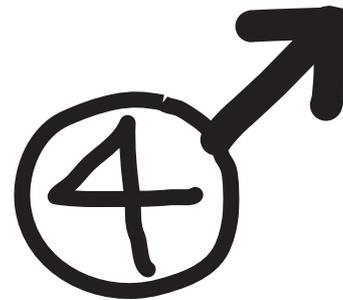
Sing

"A word from Jesus calms the sea"

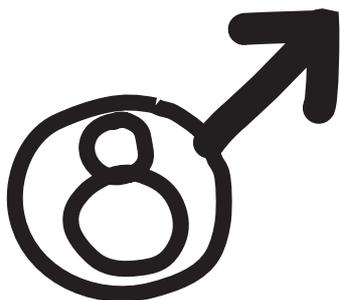




0 = calm (water like a mirror)



4 = breeze (small waves)



8 = gale (waves 2-3 metres)



11 = violent storm (waves 9-10 metres)

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proper 8

1. Introduction to the theme of the day

“If I can only touch his cloak”

Aim: We recognise that when we really need something, nothing can come between us and God.

Leader's Reflection: In today's Gospel, two very different people overcome very different obstacles in order to approach Jesus. The first is a man of high standing; a synagogue official. He must give up his rank and self-importance in order to approach Jesus for help. The second is a woman suffering a shameful disease who must give up her secrecy in order to approach him. They are similar in that both must give up a mask of respectability and approach Jesus simply as a person in need.

2. We arrive

We sit in a circle ready to listen to the Gospel.

Has anyone anything they would like to tell us about last week's Family Sheet?

Focus

A lighted candle, green fabric for ordinary time, a cloak.

Gospel: Mark 5:21-43

Read from the Lectionary or Children's Lectionary.

3. We respond

What is the Gospel asking of us?

Jesus needs us to need him.

Today's story is for everyone. We think about the difficulties which can be overcome when we really want to speak to Jesus.



Young ones and Juniors

Story

Rose had woken up with a headache. It was worse than her usual headaches, because she was so anxious and nervous about today. Today Jesus was coming to town. Today she had to do something terrible. Today everyone would find out.

Jairus hadn't slept at all. His eyes were sore and red-rimmed. He had been pacing up and down in his little girl's room all night. He must make a decision. He was Jairus, the custodian of the synagogue, an important and respected man. Could he really stoop to begging a peasant carpenter for help. What would all the people think? He looked at his daughter on the bed – she was dying. There was no more time. He had to decide now.

Rose pulled on a long dark coat, and wrapped a scarf around her head so nobody could see her. Maybe if she could just get close to Jesus; maybe if she could brush against him in the crowd; maybe that was all it would take to cure her of this terrible disease. She thought of them all, of her neighbours, of Jairus and the men from the synagogue, and all his friends. How could she explain to Jesus in front of all of them? She shuddered with embarrassment. There had to be a way, without anyone knowing.

Jairus stared out of the window. Maybe he could invite Jesus for dinner, maybe that was the way; maybe he could talk to Jesus privately, explain that he didn't want any publicity, that he was a respectable man. Jesus would understand, surely. A great cheering suddenly arose in the street below: Jesus was on his way. One last look at his dying daughter, and Jairus left the room.

Down in the street it was bedlam. Jesus was fast approaching. Jairus saw immediately that there could be no whispering in Jesus' ear, no discreet invitations, even shouting wouldn't be enough. His daughter was dying and there was only one thing to do. He pushed his way through the crowd and hurled himself onto the ground in front of Jesus.

Jesus had stopped suddenly, almost stumbled over something it seemed. Rose wondered why, but was very relieved. She tried to catch her breath. It was a long time since she had been out in a crowd like this and she was terrified, she had never imagined so many people. Jesus had seemed to be getting further and further away – but

now that he had stopped, she had to take her chance. She squeezed through the crowds, not wanting to push against people. If they knew ... she trembled at the thought. Then, there was Jesus, just inches away from her. She crouched down and reached forward – just his cloak, if she could just touch ...

Jesus looked up from the man on the ground in front of him. "Who touched me?"

Rose kept her eyes down, staring at the ground, maybe he wouldn't see her ... but she could feel him turning around, searching her out. Dear God, he wasn't going to let her escape. Then Rose slowly became aware of another face staring at her; the face of a man on the ground like she was, the face of a man called Jairus. It was Jairus, the man from the synagogue, the man who had sent her away in disgust because of her disease. Rose felt faint with fear of what was to come. Slowly she lifted her eyes to meet Jairus' gaze, to plead with him. It was only then that she saw he had been crying. Why on earth should a man like Jairus be crying out here in this public place? What was he doing on the floor anyway in front of Jesus? Rose was confused. What was even more confusing, Jesus seemed to be smiling at her, as if he understood, almost as if he admired her. He wanted her to say something. She looked up at Jesus. "It was me who touched your cloak," she said.

The worst of it was over then. Jesus didn't seem disgusted when she told him about her disease; she knew he had cured her; he didn't need to tell her. And all the time there was Jairus behind him, anxious about something, but patient, encouraging her with little smiles and nods. Even when the messenger arrived to tell him his daughter was dead, he still stood there, with tears rolling down his cheeks, supporting Rose, trying to be happy for her, even though it seemed as if Jesus had forgotten him.

When finally Jesus let her go and turned around to talk to him again, Jairus just shook his head sadly. It was too late. "Take me to her," said Jesus, and Jairus looked up at him, wondering, not quite daring to hope. Even now, even when the girl was dead, could he ...? Rose smiled. Maybe, maybe it could happen, maybe even that was possible for this man.

4. Activity

Young ones and Juniors

The children can act out the story, then they can try to imagine what happened next. How do Rose's neighbours react to her cure?

How does Jairus celebrate his daughter's recovery? Do they become friends?

The picture from the template page can be coloured at home or used as an alternative activity in the session.

Tips for learning difficulties

Everyone can be given a part within the drama, if necessary supported or prompted by another child.

5. We come together

Parents can be invited to join in at this stage.

Focus

Gather around the candle and the cloak.

Gospel

Rose was very poorly; Jairus' daughter was dying. Both of them wanted Jesus' help but they didn't know how to get it, and they didn't want other people to know. In the end they wanted his help so much that they asked him, and so he helped them.

Prayer

Jesus, sometimes we really need help, but we don't know how to get it, or we don't want other people to know, or maybe we just can't be bothered. Help us to remember to ask you for help, and help us not to be afraid to ask other people as well. Amen.

Share

The children can act out the second part of their play – what happened next.

Sing

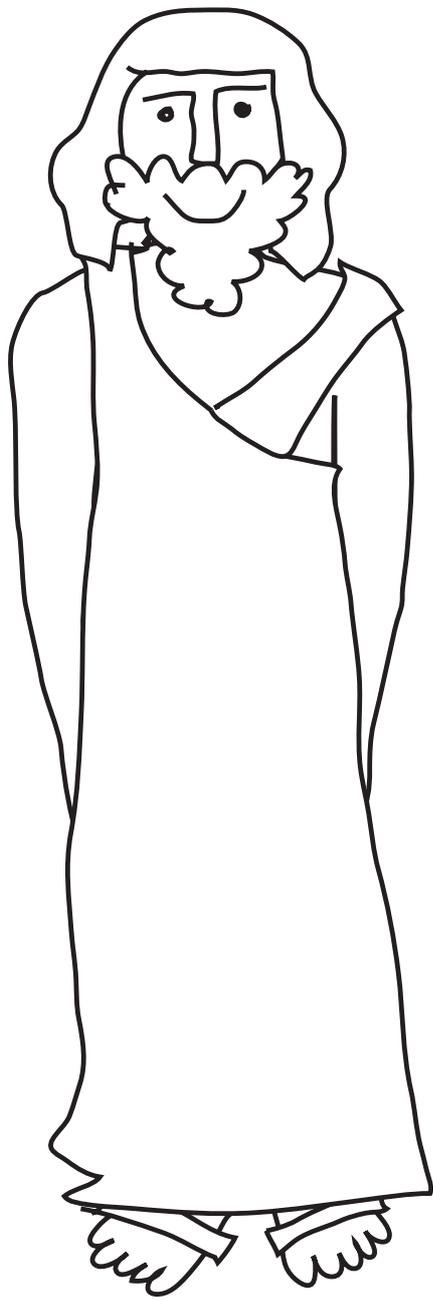
“Reach out and touch the Lord”

“Oh my Lord”





Jairus jumping with joy



Jesus



Rose, thanking Jesus

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proper 9

1. Introduction to the theme of the day

“Who’d be a prophet?”

Aim: To recognise that the role of prophet or person of faith is not always comfortable or welcome.

Leader’s Reflection: Everyone likes to be popular – especially when, like Jesus, you are seeking to do the very best for people. His reputation in the surrounding countryside was already high and on the increase. It was natural for him to want to take his gifts of healing and preaching back to his home town – of all people surely they should be among the first to benefit.

The problem lies in the fact that the people knew him too well. They had grown up with him – how could he now be a preacher and healer? And even Jesus was unable to overcome their preconceptions.

People change, especially when their lives are touched by the power of the Good News. Perhaps you have undergone such a change, how did people around you react? Perhaps you have witnessed dramatic changes in others, how did you react? How can you help the children to be open to change and growth, remembering words of Cardinal Newman: “To live is to change – to change often is to become perfect”?

2. We arrive

We sit in a circle ready to listen to the Gospel.

Has anyone anything they would like to tell us about last week’s Family Sheet? Did the children help anyone in need last week?

Focus

A green cloth, candle and open Bible.

Gospel: Mark 6:1-6

Read from the Lectionary or Children’s Lectionary.

3. We respond

What is the Gospel asking of us?

Work in age groups if appropriate. Alternatively, choose the discussion ideas, story and activity most suitable for your group.



Young ones

A story to finish

Dominic had lots of friends. They played together at playtimes, went swimming together and had had a great time last weekend at Dom's (as his friends called him) when they had all watched (name of currently popular film).

The trouble was that there was now a big argument. Martin's older brother had told them that he had made a den in the woods and wanted to take them with him. He said he had matches and would cook something for a picnic.

Dom didn't like the sound of it. His mum had warned him not to go into the woods without an adult and though Martin's brother was twelve, Dom was sure that wasn't

grown up enough. He also wasn't sure about lighting fires in the wood.

When he said this to his friends they said he was being a baby. He said he wasn't, and tried to explain why. They wouldn't listen – what Martin's brother said was much more exciting.

He knew they weren't going to listen when they started saying "Dominic is a softie," "Dominic's a scaredy cat," "Dominic's no fun."

Dom was upset – but even more worried for his friends when he saw them going to the woods.

What should he do? He didn't really want to tell tales – but what if something happened?

Invite the children to think about Dom's dilemma – what might happen in the woods? What should he do? What will they think if he tells his mum – and they arrive just in time to stop a nasty accident – or help someone who has been hurt? How would Dom feel if something awful happened and he hadn't said anything? Have the children ever been in a similar situation? How did they deal with it?

Juniors

Story

It may be useful to have a photograph of Nelson Mandela available to show the children

Nelson Mandela was a prophet in his own country, South Africa, and like Jesus saw his message rejected.

For many years, South Africa had lived under an unfair system called apartheid. It kept black and white people apart, with almost all of the power in the hands of a few white people.

Nelson became a lawyer and saw so many cases of black people being treated unjustly that he decided he had to speak out against it. Although he tried to use non-violent means, others chose violence and he ended up being imprisoned on Robben Island. As he started a sentence that was to last nearly thirty years he said, "During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to the struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have

cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal that I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

These words encouraged others and, though there was much bloodshed, eventually the Government of South Africa realised that they had to listen to the prophet they had imprisoned.

In 1990, Nelson Mandela took the last steps in what he called his "long walk to freedom". Later he was elected as the first black president of South Africa. He is recognised as a great person who dared to speak for the truth even at the risk of his own life.

Have the children heard of Nelson Mandela? You might like to talk a little more about the apartheid system – black people having to carry passes and only being able to live in certain areas. Were these laws fair? Why did the South African Government want to stop people like Nelson Mandela speaking out? Can the children identify similar situations in the world today?

4. Activity

Young ones

Complete the drawing of Dom and draw in two thought-bubbles. In one, the children can draw how Dom thinks his friends will react if he tells his mum. In the other, they can draw how his friends react when Dom and his mum come to the rescue.

Juniors

Invite the children to think about things they have heard on the news and to think of something that they think is wrong. What would they like to say to those with power to change things? The children can write this on a speech bubble in readiness for coming together.

Tips for learning difficulties

Use the story and picture of Dom. The children may be able to illustrate the story as for the younger children. Alternatively, they could draw Dom: happy because he has saved his friends in one bubble – and sad because he did not say anything and something happened.

5. We come together

Parents can be invited to join in at this stage.

Focus

Light the candle. Invite those gathered to become still, ready to listen to the Word of God.

Gospel

In the Gospel, we hear that Jesus went back to his home town to heal people there and to tell his family and friends about the Good News.

They refused to listen. They could not believe that someone they had grown up with could possibly be a great prophet and miracle-worker.

Jesus was very sad, amazed that they did not believe in him.

Prayer

Jesus, you ask us to be like you;
to stand up for what is right even when it makes us unpopular.
Help us to grow more like you on the inside,
so that we are strong and brave like you.
Amen.

Share

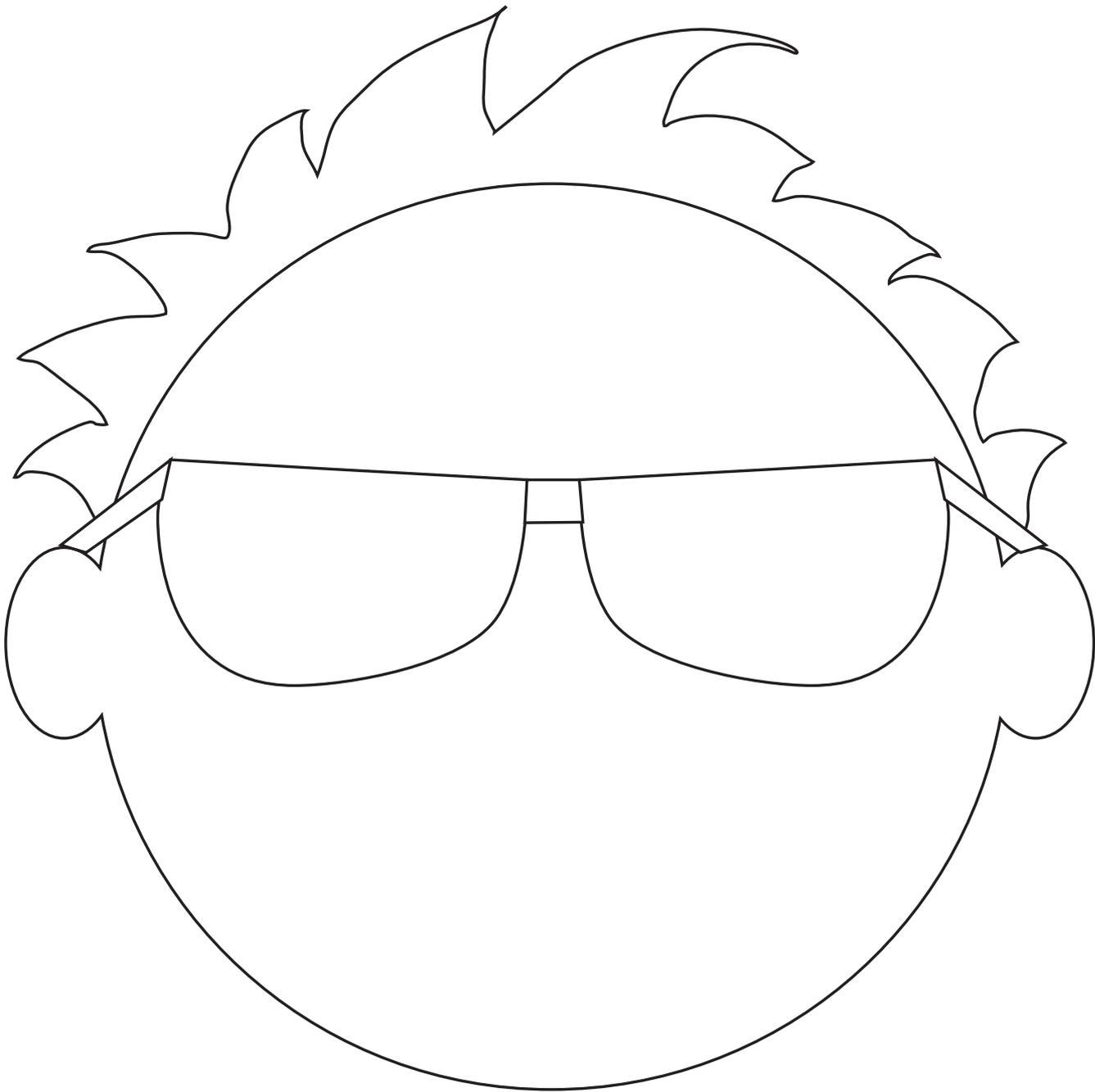
Talk about what happened in the session – what the children have learnt. Explain Dom's dilemma and share some of the thoughts the children had. Juniors might like to have a soapbox from which to read their declaration on how things should change (explain the hallowed tradition of the soapbox and its role in people telling their truth). Dom and the declarations could then be pinned to a display board headed "Speaking up for Truth".

Sing

Use the tune of "Give me joy in my heart" with the verses:

1. Give me truth in my heart, keep me speaking
2. Give me strength in my heart, keep me serving
3. Give me hope in my heart, keep me loving





15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proper 9

1. Introduction to the theme of the day

“On the road”

Aim: To explore the missionary dimension of the Church's life.

Leader's Reflection: Most of the work we do with children is done in familiar places – churches or parish rooms. For many Christians, it may be far less secure – and certainly throughout the course of history, many of those charged with the mission of spreading the Good News have fallen foul of governments, rulers or even simply local factions. However, had people not had the courage to take to the road and proclaim the Gospel we would not be here now. Though we are unlikely to be asked to be missionaries in the traditional sense of going abroad, we are still called to be missionary. People do not know the joy of the Gospel, or are confused by the message. We may find that some of the things we say are unwelcome in wider society, but we are called to take the risk so that a new generation of children come to know the call of Jesus for them to follow him.

2. We arrive

We sit in a circle ready to listen to the Gospel.
Has anyone anything they would like to tell us about last week's Family Sheet?

Focus

Green cloth, candle, open Bible, one or more handkerchiefs or checked tea towels, tied to a pole (as travellers' packs).

Gospel: Mark 6:7-13

Read from the Lectionary or Children's Lectionary.

3. We respond

What is the Gospel asking of us?

Work in age groups if appropriate. Alternatively, choose the discussion ideas, story and activity most suitable for your group.



Young ones

Story (read with help from the children)

Jack and Jessica were going on holiday.

“We’re going camping,” said Dad. “We have to take the tent, camping stove and beds, so we are short of space. You can only take as many books and toys as you can fit in these bags.”

The children were very excited and took the bags up to their rooms.

It wasn’t as easy as they thought, though.

Jessica collected all her colouring pencils and drawing books, her Barbies, Barbie’s caravan, her six favourite bedtime books, and ...

(invite the children to make suggestions as to what else she might have wanted to bring)

Jack got his books, his colouring pencils, his box of Lego, and ...

(again, invite the children to make other suggestions)

But there was a problem – what was the problem?

(Let the children tell you)

Jessica went into Jack’s room.

“Can you fit everything in?” she asked.

“No,” said Jack, looking at a pile of things he wanted to put in the already full-to-bursting bag. “I think we need to see if we can get more space.”

Jack and Jessica went downstairs. Mum was packing four plastic plates in with four mugs and cereal bowls.

“Can we have another bag each, please?” they said.

Mum picked up the knives and forks.

“Well,” she said, “only if you’re happy for me to leave some of these behind.”

Jack and Jessica decided that they did want to eat while they were away.

“Tell you what,” said Jessica, “let’s do it together. I’ll help you to choose, and you help me.”

“Yes,” said Jack, “then we can bring things to share – no point taking two of everything!”

So they ran up the stairs, took everything out of the bags and started again.

What do you think they took?

Invite the children to suggest what Jack and Jessica took, and then to tell you what they would want to take if they could only take a few things.

Juniors

Invite the children to think about Jesus’ instructions to the disciples in today’s Gospel.

Can they think of people who would also have had to make decisions about what to take and, more importantly, what not to take? Think about explorers, missionaries... try to create a sense of excitement and admiration for people who are prepared to leave everything behind in search of something bigger, especially those who go out to take the Good News.

Take in photos of contemporary missionaries: many missionary societies have material available for educational purposes either by post or on the Internet. What do the children think motivates the missionaries? Look particularly for pictures of catechists/Sunday school teachers in Africa/India/South America. Perhaps look at the places where they are working on a globe or world map.

Talk about the fact that they are doing the same job as you, helping people to come to know and love God.

You may also like to extend the discussion to help the children to see that, having made such sacrifices, catechists and missionaries need our support. How can we give it?

4. Activity

Young ones

Have a selection of items ready – obvious necessities like soap, toothbrushes, along with luxuries like computer games, large toys. (Ensure that there are far more things than can be fitted into the tea towel.) Open the tea towel, and invite the children to select the things that they think someone would need to take on a mission journey. Encourage them to explain why things should be included, or not.

When the tea towel is full, tie it back onto the pole.

Or, using the template drawing of a small ruck sack, write a list of what essentials to pack. The children will have to decide which luxury items to leave behind!

Juniors

As with the younger children, but include things like family photographs, certificates, keys (e.g. to home) and other things that are harder to choose from. Use the exercise to emphasise the radical nature of what Jesus asked of his first disciples, and his missionaries today.

Again tie this tea towel back onto its pole.

Tips for learning difficulties

Have a selection of things that someone travelling light would need, with one or two very obvious “mistakes” – something far too large, for example.

Help the children to pack their tea towel and take turns to carry it to the focus.

5. We come together

Parents can be invited to join in at this stage.

Focus

Light the candle. Invite those gathered to become still, to look at the tea towels and think about what might be in them.

Gospel

Jesus sends his first disciples out as missionaries to spread the Good News. He tells them to travel light, not to carry more than they need.

He also tells them how to deal with people who don't make them welcome. If someone offers hospitality, they are to take it, but if they are not treated well, they are to walk away and not even take the dust from the place away with them.

Prayer

Jesus, you send special people to tell the world about you.

Help us to be proud of them, and to pray for them.

Keep us open to the possibility that you have called us,
and help us to be willing to leave things behind and follow you.

Amen.

Share

Explain to the parents that the children have been preparing for the holidays: learning how to pack.

Go on to say that the children have been exploring what it means to be a missionary, and how hard it is to choose what to take and what to leave behind.

Encourage the children to say what is in the tea towels, and what they left out and why.

Sing

“God's Spirit is in my heart”

“One more step along the road I go”



16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proper 11

1. Introduction to the theme of the day

“Rest for a while”

Aim: To reflect on the importance of taking time to rest and recreate.

Leader's Reflection: The disciples had gone at the Lord's bidding and done great things, beyond anything they could have asked or imagined. They probably thought they could go on and do more, but Jesus is a wise and loving Master. He knows from his own experience that there comes a time when one needs to withdraw, to rest, and to recharge the batteries.

It is a strong factor in the life of many committed Christians, the desire to serve, to give unstintingly through our love of God and of those placed in our care.

Jesus honours that desire but knows that we need rest... and, when we are tired and taking our rest, he comes to the people and cares for them himself.

We are not indispensable, nor do we work alone. We serve a Master who gave himself for his sheep. We work, in fact, in partnership with him, not as slaves who must work themselves to death to prove their love for him.

2. We arrive

We sit in a circle ready to listen to the Gospel.

Has anyone anything they would like to tell us about last week's Family Sheet?

Focus

Green cloth, candle, open Bible – and a symbol of rest or holidays... e.g. a pillow, sun cream, a set of balance scales.

Gospel: Mark 6:30-34

Read from the Lectionary or Children's Lectionary.

3. We respond

What is the Gospel asking of us?

Work in age groups if appropriate. Alternatively, choose the discussion ideas, story and activity most suitable for your group.



Young ones

Story

Maisie had been in school a whole year. She had been in the Christmas play as an angel. She had learnt to write her name, the names of her friends and the days of the week. She could add numbers up to ten and do some take-aways. She knew where Mrs Willis's office was, and she had taken the register to the office five times. She had done three assemblies in front of the whole school and could do up her own shoes.

"What a lot you have learnt this year!" said Gran.
"Your brain must be absolutely full!"

Maisie thought about it.

"Not really, there's lots more to learn. I took my work to show Miss Jones in Year 6 and they do really hard stuff."

"But they are nearly all eleven and will be going to secondary school soon," said Gran.

"I know that, but to be as good as that, Mrs Kent says I have to work very hard," said Maisie.

Gran smiled. "Yes, but do you know something? Mrs

Kent knows that you have to do other things too."

Maisie looked at Gran. How did she know what Mrs Kent knew?

Gran said, "When Mrs Kent and I were little we had a saying: All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."

"But I'm a girl, Gran!" exclaimed Maisie.

"All right – All work and no play makes Maisie a dull girl. What it means is that if you work hard you need time to play too."

"Oh," said Maisie thoughtfully, "is that why Mrs Kent is asking us to tell her if we're going on holiday, or going on a playscheme? She says, 'You need to have time to play and enjoy yourselves.' Is that what she means?"

"Hmm, not just children," said Gran, "we all need time to play and to relax!"

"Grans don't play!" giggled Maisie.

"I'll race you to the swings," shouted Gran.

"That's not fair," laughed Maisie, "you had a head start!"

What do the children enjoy doing in the summer holidays? Encourage them to enjoy the break and to use it well!

Juniors

Use the story below to remind the children of the Song of Creation (Genesis 1) which shows how God created something new each day – encourage them to join in the "chorus".

Story

In the beginning the earth was a formless void – and then the Spirit of God swept over the waters.

God said, "Let there be light!"

And there was light – separating night from day.

Chorus: And evening came and morning came – the first day.

On the second day, God said, "Let there be a dome in the heavens." And God called the dome "Sky".

Chorus: And evening came and morning came – the second day.

On the third day, God said, "Let dry land appear." He called the dry land Earth and the waters the Seas.

Chorus: And evening came and morning came – the third day.

On the fourth day, God said, "Let there be lights in the sky." And he made two great lights: the sun and the moon – and the stars.

Chorus: And evening came and morning came – the fourth day.

On the fifth day, God said, "Let the waters and the skies be filled with living creatures!" And fish swam in the waters and birds flew in the sky.

Chorus: And evening came and morning came – the fifth day.

On the sixth day, God said, "Let the earth be filled with animals of every kind!" And God made every species of animal that has been known, lives now, and has yet to be born.

And God said, "Let us make human beings now, in our own image and likeness."

And God made human beings, men and women in God's own likeness to be stewards of his Creation.

Chorus: And evening came and morning came, the sixth day.

And, after God's mighty work of Creation, on the seventh day ...

Chorus: God rested!

4. Activity

Young ones

What sort of things are the children going to be doing over the summer? Invite them to draw them in the “My Summer Holiday” frame.

Juniors

Talk about the need for balance in everyone’s life: Jesus went to pray and encouraged his disciples to do the same. God created a whole universe and then rested (note: it may be appropriate to say that this is a “Song” – and God’s days are not necessarily 24 hours long).

What work have the children done over the last academic year? Invite them to write this down on a piece of paper and put them on one side of a balance – either a picture or, if possible, a real set of scales. Now invite them to write down what they are going to do to balance their work with rest, and put these on the other side of the balance. (Perhaps making the point that God worked for quite some time before taking rest! One day’s rest for God made up for six days’ work.)

Tips for learning difficulties

What are the children going to do on holiday? Invite them to draw it on the “My Summer Holiday” frame.

5. We come together

Parents can be invited to join in at this stage.

Focus

Light the candle. Invite those gathered to become still, to be aware that we are on the threshold of the summer holidays for the children.

Gospel

Jesus welcomes his disciples back and shares their joy at the great things they have done. But he knows, from his own experience, that great things come at cost. The disciples need to rest but the crowds think they need the disciples and have followed them.

Jesus takes that work to himself – while the disciples rest, Jesus speaks to the crowds.

Prayer

Jesus, you love our work and all we try to do for you.
But you know that we need rest, that we need re-creation.

Give us happy holidays, whether at home or away,
so that we remember that you are the Lord of Rest,
as well as the Lord who calls us to serve.

Amen.

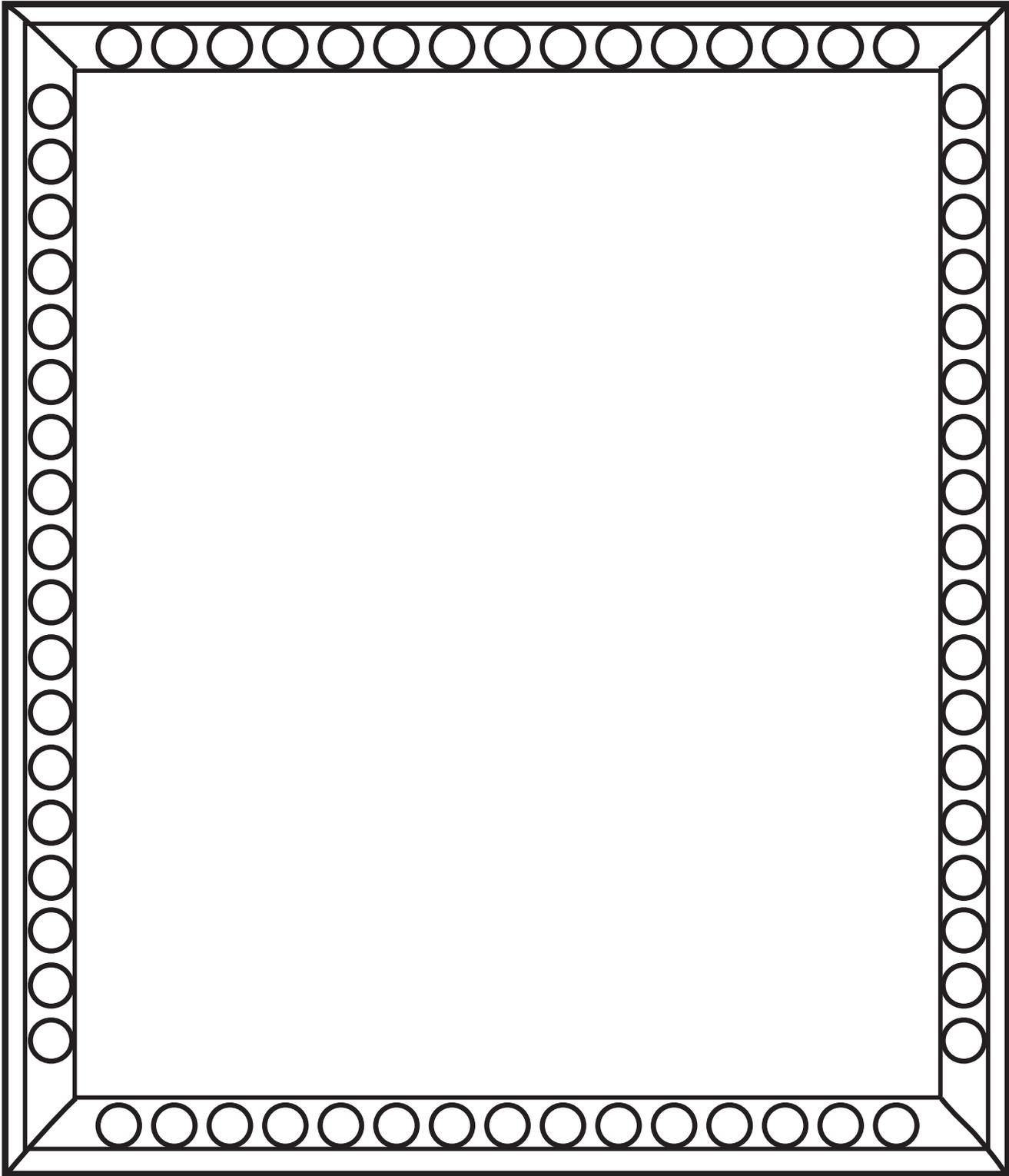
Share

The children have been thinking about balance in people’s lives. Many of us work very hard, some of us too hard! This isn’t actually God’s will for us. What can we do to redress the balance in our own lives so that our rest gives as much glory to God as our hard work?

Sing

“Take the word of God with you as you go”
“You shall go out with joy”





My Summer Holiday

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proper 12

1. Introduction to the theme of the day

“A little goes a long way”

Aim: To explore how God takes our apparently small offerings and does great things with them.

Leader's Reflection: We leave Mark's Gospel for a few weeks and spend time with John, focusing on chapter 6 in which he reflects on the eucharistic significance of Jesus feeding the five thousand. The simple gift from a small boy, placed into the hands of Jesus, opens up the mystery of the gift of Christ's own body as the bread of life.

We might speculate what the reaction of the disciples was when the child offered five loaves and two fish to feed a crowd which, as Philip suggested, needed at least two hundred denarii. Did they try to send him away? Did they smile condescendingly? And what of Jesus?

When we think that what we offer is small and inadequate, we might reflect on how Jesus might have looked at the child, and see that look in his gaze upon us. Then, perhaps, we will have the confidence to hand to him the little we have and trust that he will transform it.

2. We arrive

We sit in a circle ready to listen to the Gospel.

Has anyone anything they would like to tell us about last week's Family Sheet?

Focus

Green cloth, candle, open Bible and a basket.

Gospel: John 6:1-15

Read from the Lectionary or Children's Lectionary.

3. We respond

What is the Gospel asking of us?

As the holiday season is upon us and children's numbers are likely to be reduced one long story is offered this week with different discussion ideas and activities for different age groups. Use those most appropriate for your group.



Young ones and Juniors

Story

Samson had been called Samson after the great Hebrew warrior. He guessed his parents had thought that giving him that name would make him grow up big and strong – but it had not worked. Samson was very small for his age and, after a bad fall when he was a toddler, walked with a limp.

His parents had decided to take him to see someone called Jesus. He had cured lots of people and they hoped he might cure Samson. Mum had packed a picnic and they had set off. It was a long way and Dad had given him a piggy back when he got tired.

When they arrived, Samson saw thousands of other people but could not see a great man who looked like Jesus. Samson thought he would be like – well, big and strong and standing out from the crowd... but there was no one like that.

Suddenly, he saw his Uncle Andrew. He knew that Uncle Andrew was a follower of Jesus so asked his mum if he could go and see him.

Mum said yes and told him to take some of the picnic with him to give to Uncle Andrew. “I don’t suppose he thought to bring anything!” she said.

As Samson got close to Uncle Andrew, he saw a lot of worried faces, and one very kind one smiling quietly to himself as everyone else was fretting about how they were supposed to feed all these people. The kind man caught sight of Samson and gave him a wink. Samson guessed that this was Jesus and winked back.

At last, Uncle Andrew noticed Samson and beamed at him, “Samson! Well, here’s a start with some food. Can we have this?”

Samson was feeling a bit hungry himself, but saw how worried everyone was, so said yes.

Jesus beckoned him over and Samson gave him the bread and fish.

Jesus gave thanks for the bread and the fish and then asked the disciples and Samson to hand them out. Every time Samson had given one lot out he came back for more, and there always was a lot more waiting. He could not understand it, though he noticed Jesus was smiling broadly every time he looked at him.

When everyone had had enough to eat, Samson went over to Jesus.

“How did you do that?” he asked.

“Ah,” said Jesus, “that’s between me and my Father. Maybe it’s time for you to run back to your mum and dad.”

Samson was about to say that he could not run, until he realised that all the time he had been giving out the food he had been running – running backwards and forwards to share the food as quickly as he could.

Jesus winked at him again. Samson winked back and then gave Jesus a huge hug.

Young ones

Invite the children to respond to the story. Have they ever felt like Samson – very small and not very strong? What do they think Jesus is like? How did people feel when they received the food?

Juniors

Invite the children to respond. Why were all the people following Jesus? How do they think Jesus felt when he saw them all coming? Did Jesus know in advance what he was going to do? How did the small child feel in front of all those people – and when he saw what Jesus did with his small offering? Have the children ever done something small that turned out to be special?

4. Activity

Young ones

Allow the children to choose either a loaf or fish outline from the template. Help them to think of one small thing they could do or share with someone else. They can draw themselves doing it in either the loaf or the fish – and colour in the rest.

Juniors

Think about the child's offering and introduce the idea that Jesus was not just feeding the people but was setting the scene for explaining that he was the bread come down from heaven... the people needing something practical to start them off.

Talk about our own Presentation of Gifts at the Eucharist. What do we offer? What does God do with them? Draw out that our simple gifts of bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus. We do not know how, any more than the disciples knew how Jesus had fed five thousand people, but we know it happens.

We can also offer the things we do and say. Encourage the children to think of one thing they would like to offer at the Presentation of Gifts next time. They can write it on one of the loaf outlines.

Tips for learning difficulties

Have the outlines ready cut out. Help the child to think about something good about themselves and to draw this onto their loaf or fish.

5. We come together

Parents can be invited to join in at this stage.

Focus

Light the candle. Invite those gathered to become still.

Gospel

We are leaving Mark's Gospel for a while and over the summer will be reading John's account of the sign or miracle story of Jesus feeding the five thousand. His reflections help us to understand that Jesus is the living bread come down from heaven. Today, we hear about the people following Jesus into the desert and having no food. A small child comes forward with a very small offering which Jesus takes and uses to feed all the people, with twelve baskets of food left over.

Prayer

Jesus, you invite us to offer the things we do so that you can transform them into something great.

Some things that you do we will know about and some things you keep as secrets for us in heaven.

Help us to trust you in all we do.

Amen.

Share

In our session, we heard the story about the small boy who we called Samson. He offered Jesus his lunch and Jesus fed five thousand people.

We have been thinking about the things we could offer Jesus. (Invite the children to talk about what they drew or wrote if appropriate.)

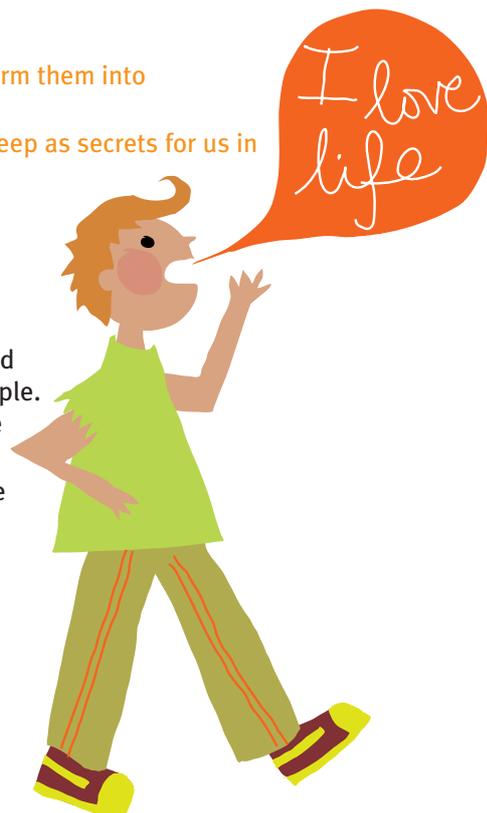
During our song, we will put our own coloured-in loaf or fish into the basket as a sign of offering it to Jesus.

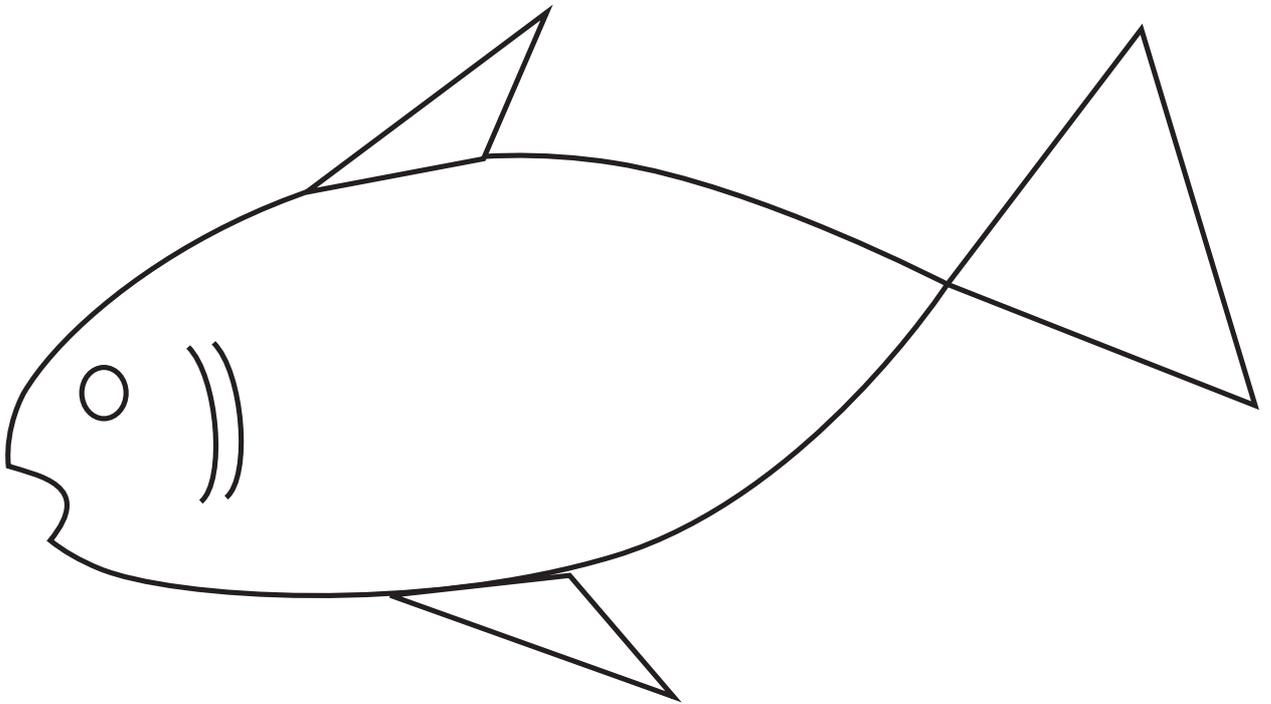
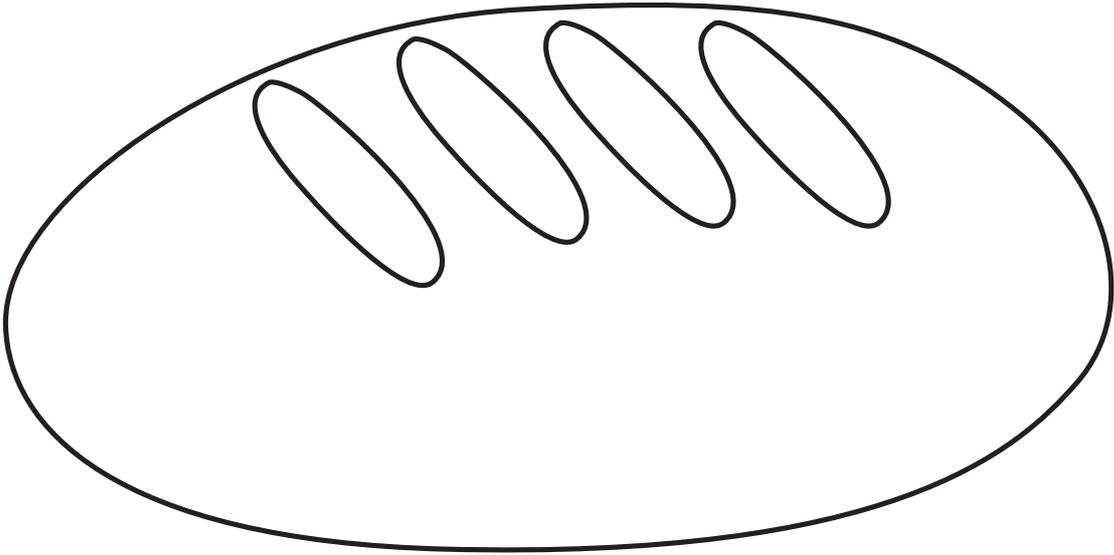
Sing

"All that I am"

"Take my hands"

"Take oh take me as I am"





18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proper 13

1. Introduction to the theme of the day

“I am the
bread of life”

Aim: To help the children develop a deep awareness of meeting Jesus in the Eucharist.

Leader's Reflection: Attracted by the miraculous feeding of five thousand people, crowds continue to follow Jesus. He is aware, though, that they are looking for more miracles, perhaps more free lunches, and are not yet ready to look behind the miracle to find its meaning.

This is the great danger with miracles; we can be tempted to stay at the level of marvelling, of wanting more of the same, particularly if it looks as if it will spare us work. Signs and wonders are wonderful things, but they can lead us to focus on them, waiting for the next one, hoping it will be bigger and better and even more convincing. They can be an excuse for not actually getting on and doing something.

Perhaps this is one reason why Jesus avoided the dramatic and complicated as a way of being with us always, giving us the greatest sign of all hidden in a basic staple of life: the living presence of Jesus in a simple wafer.

2. We arrive

We sit in a circle ready to listen to the Gospel.

Has anyone anything they would like to tell us about last week's Family Sheet?

Did anyone have a go at baking bread?

Focus

Green cloth, candle, Bible or Book of the Gospels open at today's reading, a loaf.

Gospel John 6:24-35

Read from the Lectionary or the Children's Lectionary.

3. We respond

What is the Gospel asking of us?

As this is the holiday season and children are likely to be away, use the story for all the children and then choose the activity most suitable for the group you have this week.

Young ones and Juniors

Story

John was not a very clever boy. In spite of everything his teacher tried, he just could not get the hang of even simple maths. The biggest problem he had was with a language called Latin. Even when his friend gave him extra help, John thought his brain just was not big enough for the words to go in.

And why did it matter if John could not learn to understand and speak Latin? Well, John really wanted to be a Catholic priest and in those days the Mass and lots of the prayers were said in Latin.

This is what “The Lord be with you” sounded like: “Dominus vobiscum”; and the congregation would say: “Et cum spiritu tuo.”

Shall we try to say that together?

Most people learned just enough Latin to join in with some of the Mass, but priests needed to know much more.

John tried very hard and everyone realised that he was meant to be a priest. Unfortunately, he was called up into the army. John being John, he spent the morning he was due to go into the army in church praying. He lost all track of time and when he came out, everyone else had left without him!

Eventually, though, John was ordained a priest, one of the happiest moments of his life.

Because he was not very clever or ambitious, he was sent to be parish priest of a sleepy little village deep in the countryside. But something very strange began to happen. People started coming from all over France to talk to him. They would talk about the things they had done wrong, and John would absolve them from their sins. This is known as “confession”. People who were wondering whether God was calling them to be a priest or nun would go to John to hear his advice. So many people came that sometimes John would be hearing confessions for sixteen hours a day. In one year twenty thousand visitors came to the tiny village just to see John.

His favourite time, though, was when everyone had gone and he could be in the church on his own or with a few of his parishioners. One day, he met one of the poor farmers. He was too old to do heavy work and spent a lot of time in the church too. John asked him what prayers he used and the farmer looked puzzled for a moment. Then he smiled broadly and said, “Well, Jesus is there, isn’t he?” pointing to the tabernacle. “I just sit and look at him – and he sits and looks at me!”

John smiled back, “Yes,” he said, “that is the best kind of prayer, isn’t it?”

John lived to be 73 years old and was much loved.

People began to realise that miracles were happening when they prayed to John for help and, eventually, John was made a saint. His full name is St John Vianney and his feast day is 4 August.

Spend some time talking about prayer: when you pray, how you pray and ways in which we can help each other to pray.



4. Activity

Young ones

Do the children have things that they find hard? How does hearing about someone like John Vianney help?
Have the children had times when they have enjoyed peace and quiet in church or another building or open space?
Have they ever felt Jesus close to them?

If possible take the children into church to see the tabernacle and show them the consecrated hosts safely inside. Use the template of the tabernacle. The children can decorate the “outside” and then colour in the ciborium (a chalice in which the consecrated elements are held) inside – folding the tabernacle closed when they have finished. You may like to have a ciborium shape ready cut out in kitchen foil or shiny paper for the children to stick in place

Juniors

If possible, take the children into the church. Show them the tabernacle and the ciborium (a chalice in which the consecrated elements are held). It may also be possible to show the children a monstrance, explaining that the Blessed Sacrament is placed in it and people can spend time in quiet prayer during a period of Exposition, with Benediction.

Use the tabernacle template. The children can decorate the inside and outside – adding notes: e.g. the tabernacle is where the Blessed Sacrament is kept. The ciborium holds the consecrated hosts and is made of precious metal. A monstrance is used for Exposition and Benediction.

Tip for learning difficulties

Have the tabernacle templates ready cut out with ciborium-shaped pieces of foil or shiny paper. As the children work, talk about how this is a precious, special place where Jesus lives. The children can then decorate the outside.

5. We come together

Parents can be invited to join in at this stage.

Focus

It may be appropriate to go into the church for a short time of Exposition. Help the children to be still and at ease with the quiet. Invite restless children to sit with you, sharing your stillness with them. If this is not possible, gather around the focus material used at the beginning of the session.

Gospel

People are asking Jesus for another miracle, another sign so that they will believe in him. They talk about Moses giving their ancestors bread in the desert, but Jesus reminds them that it was actually God who gave them bread. It is also God who is giving them this new bread – the bread of life. This bread is Jesus.

Prayer

Lord Jesus,
you come to us looking and tasting like simple bread.
Our hearts tell us that it really is you.
Thank you for this great gift.
Help us always to be grateful,
and wanting to spend time just being with you.
Amen.

Share

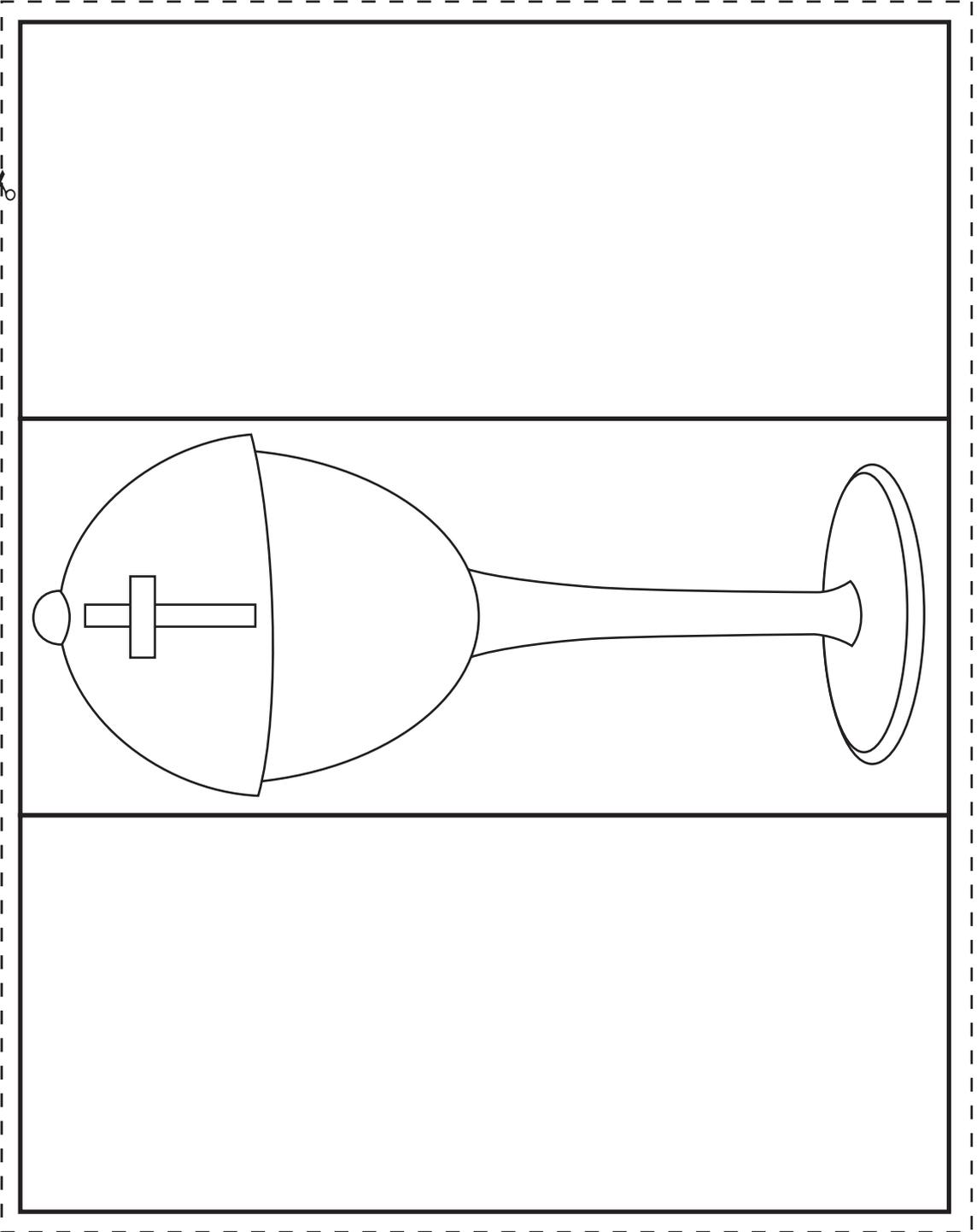
Talk about what happened in the session – what the children have learnt about the tabernacle, ciborium, monstrance, etc.

Sing

“Eat this bread” (Taizé)
“Jesus the Lord said ‘I am the bread’”



cut out



19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proper 14

1. Introduction to the theme of the day

“Seeing Jesus”

Aim: To think about how we see other people and Jesus.

Leader’s Reflection: Jesus is continuing to try to open the minds of his listeners, to enable them to see beyond the literal and take the leap of imaginative faith that will reveal the truth of what he is saying to them. Some, understandably, cannot get beyond the fact that they know his family. Putting ourselves in their shoes, we might be humble enough to see their point. Often, though, our mindset is similar: things have “always” been like this, people have “always” behaved in this way. We find it hard to believe that things can change or that there is another way of looking at them.

Faith is not about closing our minds and ceasing to think. It is about opening minds and hearts to God and letting him reveal more and more of his truth to us. Part of the work we do with children is to open their minds so that they learn to love exploring the mystery of God and are not afraid to allow imagination and insight to take them beyond the literal and rational.

2. We arrive

We sit in a circle ready to listen to the Gospel.

Has anyone anything they would like to tell us about last week’s Family Sheet? Did anyone find some unusual breads?

Focus

Green cloth, candle, Bible or Book of the Gospels open at today’s reading, a loaf (perhaps a different shape from last week).

Gospel: John 6:41-51

Read from the Lectionary or the Children’s Lectionary.

3. We respond

What is the Gospel asking of us?

One long story is offered this week for both young ones and juniors. Work in age groups, if appropriate, for the activities.



Young ones and Juniors

Story

Harry and Charlie were twins. “Not that you’d think it,” their mum often said, “like chalk and cheese you two are.”

In fact, Harry and Charlie were not identical in any way. For a start, Harry was a boy and Charlie was a girl (Charlie was short for Charlotte). Harry was quiet and loved reading and drawing. Charlie was noisy and loved anything that meant getting dirty.

Harry had fair hair and blue eyes. Charlie had brown hair and brown eyes.

Even though they were different they usually got on well together. “Which is at least one blessing,” sighed their mum.

The family had promised themselves a holiday this year, their first for five years. They had booked a caravan near the sea and everyone was getting more and more excited. Charlie was noisier than ever, running up and down stairs every five minutes to get something else she had forgotten. Harry made lots of lists and stuck them to the fridge, ticking things off as he put them out to be packed. He made sure he had his paper, paints and crayons with him. Charlie made sure she had her Frisbee, her kite and football.

“Like chalk and cheese,” said their mum, yet again.

The caravan was in a field with hundreds of others that all looked the same. The children could see people of all ages, some running and playing, others sitting in the sunshine.

Mum insisted that everyone help get things into the caravan. “This is my holiday too,” she reminded them. Once the car was unloaded and homes found for Harry’s books and paints and Charlie’s Frisbee, kite and football, Mum said that the children could go and explore the caravan park but must stay together and must not forget where their caravan was.

They found a playground where Charlie quickly made friends and introduced Harry to them.

Harry had a few turns on the swings and the slide but was more interested in watching the others. He often did this and Charlie was quite used to it, though some of the other children thought it was a bit strange.

“Doesn’t he like playing?” they asked.

“Yes,” said Charlie, “but he likes looking at things more.”

After tea, which Mum had cooked on a tiny stove, the children went out to play again. This time Harry took his drawing pad and pencils. While Charlie and the other children ran around like mad things, Harry sat and drew. Eventually, Charlie came over to get her breath back.

“Let’s see,” she said.

Harry smiled and handed her the picture. It was of Charlie, but not the Charlie wearing a T-shirt and shorts with mud on her knees and her nose. The Charlie in the

picture was wearing a long cloak which billowed out after her as she ran. She carried a banner decorated with stars and was running towards something. As she looked closer, she realised, “That’s our caravan!” but this caravan had flags flying from the television aerial and was decorated with wonderful animals, plants and swirly designs.

In front of the caravan was a luxurious-looking hammock on which a beautiful lady relaxed. There was a long, cool drink with a little umbrella in it next to her.

“Mum?” queried Charlie.

“Yes,” said Harry, “as she said – it’s her holiday too.”



4. Activity

Young ones

What do the children think Harry drew Charlie as? What about their mum? How would they draw their parents, or brothers and sisters? How would they like to be drawn?

Show the children a selection of pictures of Jesus. Which is their favourite? Which one is the most like the Jesus they imagine?

Using the template invite the children to draw a picture of Jesus in the portrait frame.

Juniors

What does Harry's picture tell us about how he sees his sister and his mum? How would they draw members of their family? What does this tell them about how they feel about their families? Does that change sometimes?

How do the people in the Gospel see Jesus?

How do the children see Jesus?

Invite the children to look at a selection of pictures of Jesus. Talk about which is their favourite, which most like the Jesus they imagine. What do the pictures tell us about Jesus? Help the children to identify the characteristics they imagine Jesus to have.

Invite the children to draw a picture of Jesus as they see him, a great king or shepherd perhaps. Encourage them to think about the details that will help to show what they think of Jesus.

Tips for learning difficulties

Look through pictures of Jesus and invite the children to show you their favourite. What do they think Jesus is like? Invite them to draw Jesus, offering help if the child expresses the need for it.

5. We come together

Parents can be invited to join in at this stage.

Focus

Light the candle. Invite those gathered to become still.

Gospel

Jesus is continuing to talk to the crowds about being the bread of life. They could not understand, they just saw the Jesus they had always known. Jesus promises that anyone who can see him as he is and believe in him will live for ever.

Prayer

**Jesus, we see you in so many ways:
you are strong, and kind,
you are loving, and want everyone to be happy
and live with you for ever.
Help us to learn more about you
so that we become more like you.
Amen.**

Share

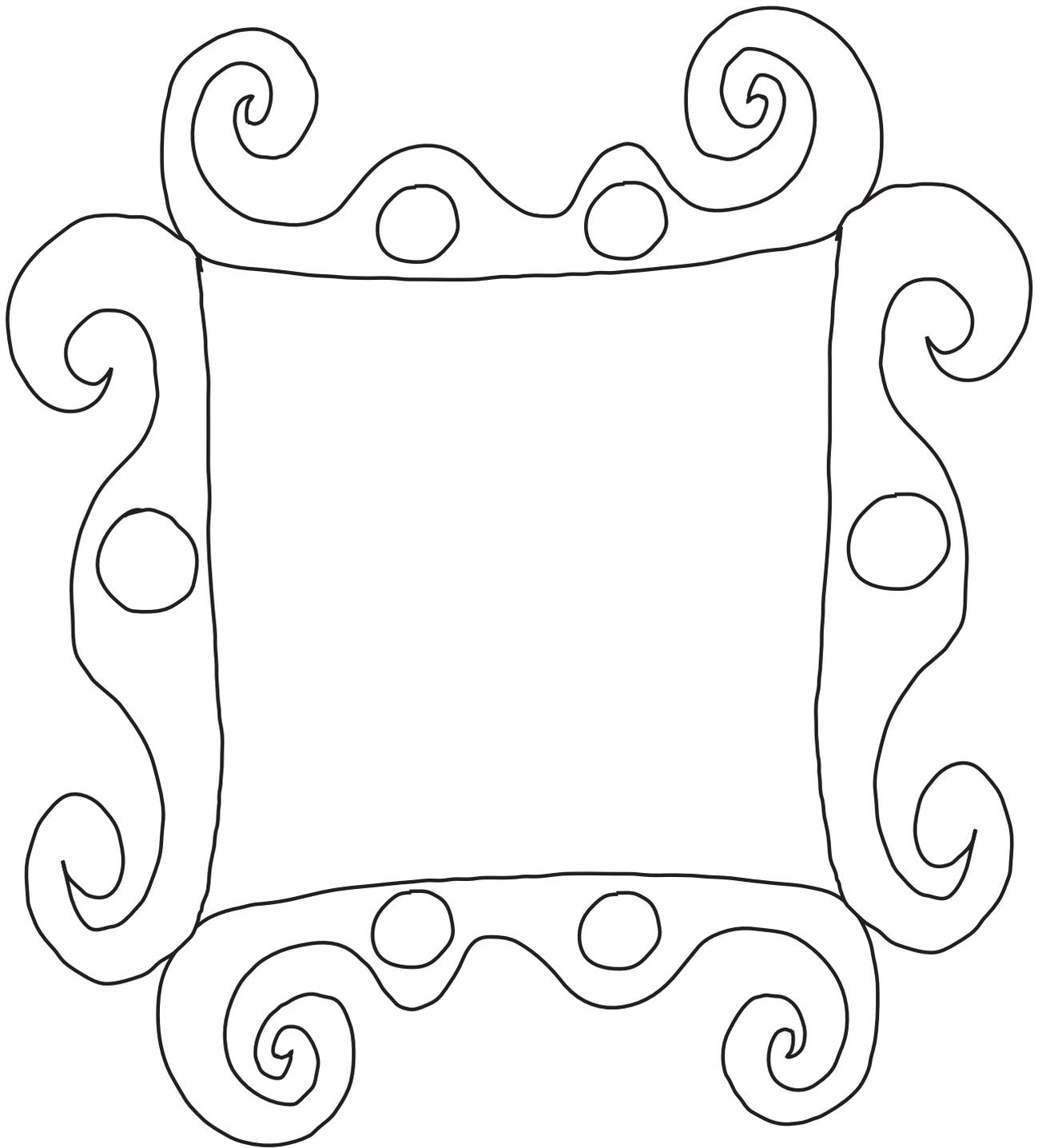
Talk about what happened in the session. Explain that you have been looking at different ways of seeing Jesus and using imagination to think about what he is like.

Perhaps show the parents the pictures of Jesus that the children were looking at during the session. Which do they like?

Sing

“This is my body, broken for you”





20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proper 15

1. Introduction to the theme of the day

“Jesus lives in me”

Aim: To reflect on the promise that believing in Jesus and sharing in the Eucharist brings the promise of eternal life.

Leader's Reflection: The fear of death is part of the human condition. Part of it is the fear of the unknown – what awaits us? There is also the fear of oblivion, of ceasing to exist. Most cultures in the world have rituals surrounding death, many showing a belief in an afterlife. What is, perhaps, different about our view of life after death is that we do not see it as more of the same, but that we will become more like Christ. As St Paul says, what is mortal and perishable will be no more, our risen bodies will be imperishable and glorious.

It is often hard to hold on to that truth, especially when we are directly affected. The Gospel today offers us reassurance that God's promise is not empty.

2. We arrive

We sit in a circle ready to listen to the Gospel.

Has anyone anything they would like to tell us about last week's Family Sheet?

Focus

Green cloth, Bible or Book of the Gospels open at today's reading, a loaf and, perhaps, a picture of Mary.

Gospel: John 6:51-58

Read from the Lectionary or Children's Lectionary.

3. We respond

What is the Gospel asking of us?

One long story is offered this week for both young ones and juniors. Work in age groups, if appropriate, for the discussion ideas and activities.



Young ones and Juniors

Story

Jack had been ill for a long time. He had an illness called leukaemia and had had all sorts of treatment. He had had something called chemotherapy which had made him sick and his hair had fallen out and he had missed loads of school.

The hospital was brilliant. There was a special family house where Mum could stay when Jack was in the hospital and at weekends, Dad, Jack's older brother Dave and big sister Laura could come and stay too.

Jack did really well but after four years of feeling absolutely great, Jack knew his illness had come back and that this time there was not much the doctors could do. His mum and dad were really upset and Dave and Laura were very unhappy. Jack wasn't sure how he felt. Sometimes, he felt afraid – sometimes he felt sad. But quite often, he just felt sick and tired of feeling sick and tired.

Eventually, Jack went into a children's hospice. If the hospital was brilliant, the hospice was amazing. Everything he and his family could ever want was there and being with other families in the same situation was really good.

There was a hospice chaplain but Jack's parish priest, Fr John, came to see him too. Fr John brought him Communion and sometimes anointed him with Oil of the Sick.

One day, Jack turned to Fr John and asked him a question that had puzzled him for some time.

"Fr John, how do I do it? What do I have to do when I die?"

Fr John thought for a moment, "Well, can you remember being born?" Jack shook his head. "Did someone tell you how to be born?" Jack smiled and shook his head again.

"I think it is a bit like that. When the time comes, people

just know what to do. I have been with quite a few people when they have died and most of them become very quiet and peaceful and seem to know they are going somewhere wonderful. I think you'll find that too."

Jack gradually got weaker and, one day, he slipped into a coma. Although he could still hear what was going on around him, he did not feel much like joining in. He could hear Mum crying quietly and could vaguely feel her and Dad holding his hands – and then Fr John anointing his head with oil and saying, "Go forth, Christian soul..."

... and Jack did. The next thing he knew, he had rushed down a dark tunnel and burst into a world of light.

He looked around and there was Gran!

"Eeh pet – you've come here a lot sooner than we'd have liked – but, here, come and give me a hug!"

Jack could still just hear Mum's distant crying and wanted to rush back and say, "Mum, Mum it's OK! I'm with Gran!" But he knew he couldn't.

Then he looked up and saw a beautiful motherly looking woman coming towards him. She crouched down in front of him and smiled, "Welcome to heaven, Jack."

"Are you ... Mary?" asked Jack.

"Yes," said Mary.

"Can you look after my mum? She's really sad and doesn't know I'm going to be OK here."

"I can do that," said Mary, "remember I had a son who died too." And she turned and pointed to a man who was coming towards them smiling broadly.

"Is that...?"

Mary smiled and nodded.

"Wow," gasped Jack as the man came to him, gave him a huge hug and said, "Welcome home, Jack!"

Young ones

Who was the man who came to meet Jack? Is Jack going to be happy in heaven? What do they think heaven will be like?

Juniors

Some children may have experienced the death of someone. Sensitively help them to tell you about it. How do Jack's story and our faith offer us hope for them – and for ourselves? What might it be like to meet Mary and Jesus?

4. Activity

Young ones

If possible, take the children into a church and show them the Lady Chapel – or bring in a statue or favourite picture. Invite them to light a candle and say a prayer; perhaps the Lord's Prayer or the Hail Mary. Explain that this is something we can do when we are sad or want to pray for someone. Colour in the picture of Gran, Mary and Jesus greeting Jack in heaven.

Juniors

As with the little ones, take the children into church. Talk about the tradition of lighting candles as a way of praying and, if appropriate, encourage them to light one and pray quietly. Colour in and add details to the picture of Jack's arrival in heaven, and add a big welcoming smile to Jesus' face.

Tips for learning difficulties

Help the children to light their candle and talk about the light and warmth.

As they colour in the picture, talk about how happy Jack is – even though he is sad that his family do not know that yet.

5. We come together

Parents can be invited to join in at this stage.

Focus

Light the candle. Invite those gathered to become still.

Gospel

Jesus reminds us that he is the bread of life and promises us that anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.

Prayer

Jesus, you give us the promise of life for ever with you.

Help us to meet you in Communion as often as we can.

Bless those people who cannot receive you in Communion as often as they would like.

Bring us all one day to be with you in heaven.

Amen.

Share

We have been thinking about Jesus' promise that those who believe in him will live for ever.

Sing

"I am the bread of life"





21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proper 16

1. Introduction to the theme of the day

“You are the Holy One of God”

Aim: To help the children to share Peter’s conviction that Jesus is the Holy One of God.

Leader’s Reflection: After leading the people through from a miraculous feeding of five thousand to the point of saying that it was necessary to eat his flesh to gain eternal life, Jesus has reached a point beyond which many cannot go. His words are intolerable; how, people ask, can anyone accept this? At one level, their position is understandable but Jesus tries to push them towards an understanding that his words are spirit and they are life. Some parts of the Christian message are unwelcome in the secular world. Many are unable or unwilling to take the risk of faith. Our task is to encourage those with whom we work to dare to believe, sharing our own conviction that ultimately there is nowhere and no one who can offer what Jesus does, the words of eternal life.

2. We arrive

We sit in a circle ready to listen to the Gospel.

Has anyone anything they would like to tell us about last week’s Family Sheet?

Focus

Green cloth, Bible or Book of the Gospels open at today’s reading, candle.

Gospel: John 6:60-69

Read from the Lectionary or the Children’s Lectionary.

3. We respond

What is the Gospel asking of us?

One long story is offered this week for both young ones and juniors.

You may like to remind the children briefly about Samson who appeared as the boy who shared his lunch (17th Sunday in Ordinary Time/Proper 12) and introduce him for those who were not there.

Young ones and Juniors

Story

Samson had not understood very much about what Jesus was talking about. In fact, he had not done much listening at all. The novelty of being able to run was still too great and, apart from the time in the boat crossing to their home in Capernaum, he had spent the last few days practising.

A few people had left the town. Samson guessed it was because Jesus was not feeding them and that was all they had been interested in. As his mum said, "We're near enough to the town to buy food for ourselves now!" The people who were left seemed to spend a lot of time discussing things with Jesus and with each other. Samson asked his mum and dad what it was about and they just said Samson was too young to understand. He was not impressed.

Late one afternoon, Samson's mum told him to go and ask Uncle Andrew if he wanted to bring Jesus for a meal. She had seen how busy he was and guessed he probably was not eating properly; Mum was good at spotting things like that.

As Samson got closer, he heard angry voices. He saw Jesus in the middle of a group of people and it was clear that no matter what Jesus said, they were not going to be convinced. Then, they turned away and stalked off, shaking their heads and muttering, "He's mad!" "He's got evil in him, saying things like that." Samson hid behind a tree until they had gone past.

When they had gone, Samson came out from behind the tree and ran over to Uncle Andrew just in time to hear Jesus say, "What about you, do you want to go away too?"

Uncle Andrew and all the other disciples were looking embarrassed and no one knew what to say.

Samson tugged Uncle Andrew's sleeve, but Uncle Andrew took no notice. Samson tried again. "What is it Samson?" he said, and it was so quiet that even though he was nearly whispering, it sounded really loud and

everyone looked at them. Samson looked down at the ground, but no hole appeared to swallow him up. So, he took a deep breath and blurted out, "Mum sent me to see if you would come and join us for tea, all of you."

He knew it wasn't quite what Mum had said but was sure he could explain. He did not want Uncle Andrew and Uncle Peter to leave Jesus. Jesus needed all the friends he could get, and he was not evil, nor mad. He was the best and kindest person Samson knew.

"Well," said Jesus, "do you want to leave me? Or shall we join Samson for tea?"

No one said anything but Samson noticed Uncle Peter looking at him and thinking hard. Samson wondered if he was remembering how Jesus had managed to share his lunch with all those people, and he was definitely looking at Samson's new strong leg.

It was Uncle Peter's turn to take a deep breath.

"Who else could we go to? You are the Holy One of God." Samson heard Jesus sigh with relief. He walked over to Uncle Peter and gave him a hug.

"Thank you, Peter." Then he turned to Samson and bent down so only Samson could hear. "Are you sure you got that message right?"

Samson looked into Jesus' eyes and knew he did not need to say anything. Jesus knew he had not!

"Well, you'd best just run on ahead and tell your mum we're coming," said Jesus, "but tell her not to worry too much, we know what we can do with a little bread, don't we?"

Samson laughed and set off running as fast as the wind to tell his family that they were in for a party!



4. Activity

School holidays may soon be over. Be like Samson and his family and have an impromptu party. Bring various items for a picnic (even if it is indoors) and allow the children to help you to get it ready: putting cloths down, crisps in bowls, cakes on plates, etc. It need not be lavish but encourage a sense of creating a sense of welcome and hospitality.

Young ones

Children can colour in the picnic scene.

How do the children think Samson felt when he heard the arguing voices?

What about when Peter said that they would stay with Jesus?

Juniors

Spend a few minutes with the children thinking about the story. How did Samson feel at various points? What about the disciples – what might they have been thinking when everyone else left? What made them stay?

Look back over recent weeks and see what the children remember about the tabernacle, ciborium, etc.

Tips for learning difficulties

Talk about Samson and how he felt about Jesus. What made Samson happy? What made him worried? What was the ending of the story like?

5. We come together

Parents can be invited to join in at this stage.

Focus

Light the candle. Welcome the “guests”.

Gospel

Jesus has been trying to help people to see him as the bread of life – the way to eternal life. Today, though, most people have had enough and have walked away from him. Jesus is worried that his closest disciples might do the same.

Fortunately, Peter speaks up and asks who else they could go to. Jesus has the message of eternal life. He is the Holy One of God.

Prayer

Jesus,

it is sad that people do not always understand your message.

Help us to believe in you,

and to stay faithful to all the things that you teach us,
even when other people do not understand.

Amen.

Share

Explain to the parents that the children have heard another story about the little boy who shared his lunch with five thousand other people, and how today he has invited Jesus and all the disciples home for tea!

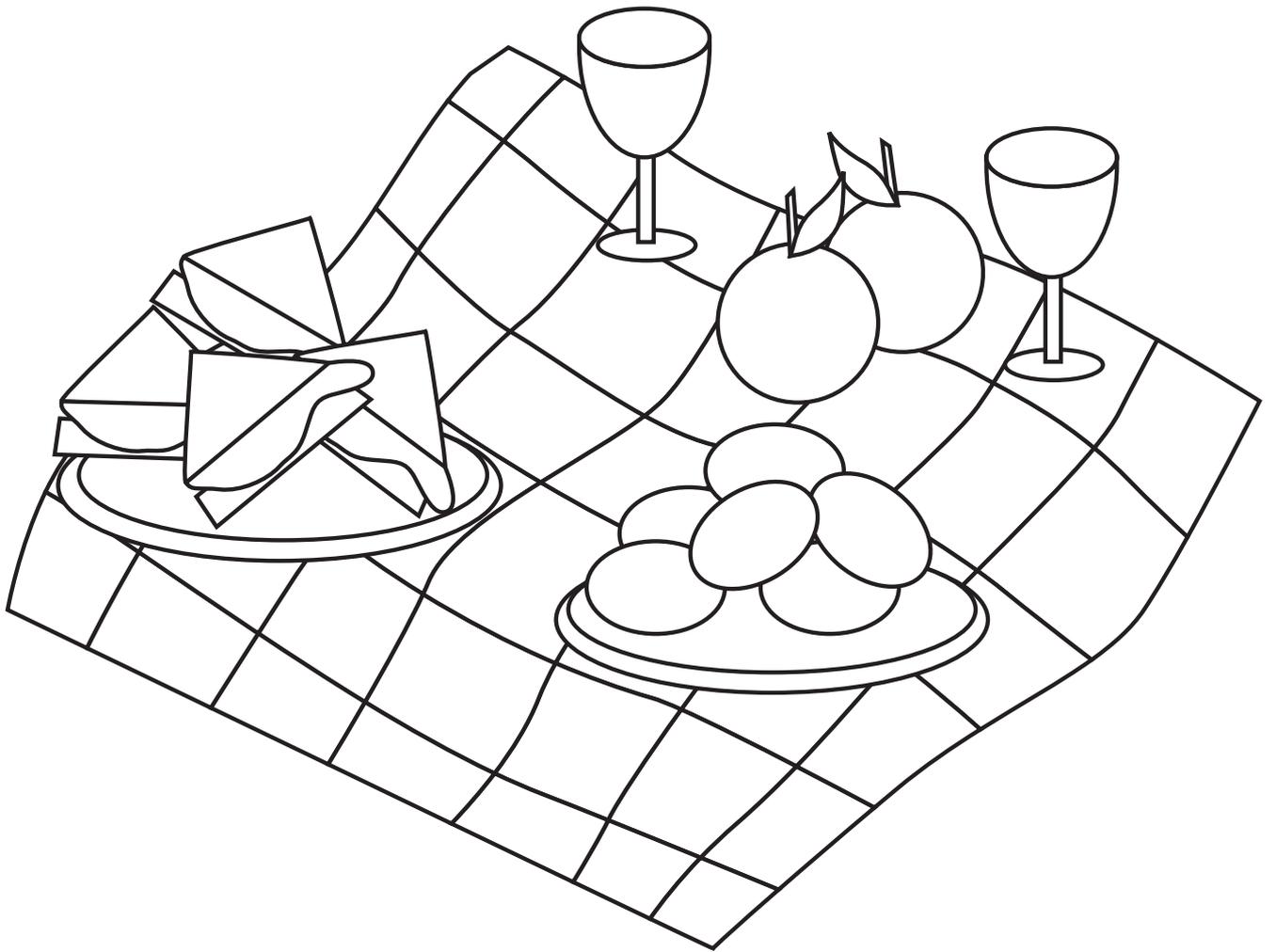
Invite everyone to share the prepared “picnic”.

Sing

“Seek ye first”

or any song that the children especially like.





22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proper 17

1. Introduction to the theme of the day

“Keep God’s law on the inside”

Aim: To show that God’s law is for the inside and not just for outer show.

Leader’s Reflection: We leave John’s eucharistic reflections this week and return to Mark. The children too will be preparing to go back to school; new classes and, for some, new schools. It is a time of new beginnings, some anxieties, and lots of new things to learn.

Mark’s Gospel this week looks at rules for living, and how their original meaning has got lost. People adhere to the rules simply because they are rules and have failed to grow in understanding of their purpose. Many primary age children are at a similar stage in their moral development. Others see rules as something to challenge, simply because they are rules. Some go on to make gang rules that are far harsher than anything an adult world might impose.

Part of our role is to help children learn the value of rules for human living: to encourage thinking and reasonable questioning so that our children move from blind adherence, or challenge for the sake of challenge, to a point of seeing that rules are there to ensure human happiness and growth.

2. We arrive

We sit in a circle ready to listen to the Gospel.

Has anyone anything they would like to tell us about last week’s Family Sheet?

Catch up on some of the news of people who have been away over the summer.

Focus

Green cloth, Bible or Book of the Gospels open at today’s reading, a candle.

Gospel: Mark 7:1-8. 14-15. 21-23

Read from the Lectionary or Children’s Lectionary.

3. We respond

What is the Gospel asking of us?

One long story is offered this week for both young ones and juniors. Work in age groups, if appropriate, for the activities.



Young ones and Juniors

A story to finish

When Craig and Darren started Junior school, you could not have had two more different boys. Craig arrived at school in his mother's new car (perhaps use a brand here). His uniform was brand new and everything had his name tapes neatly sewn in. His lunch box was new and had healthy sandwiches in it: a no-sugar drink and fruit for break time. His PE kit was in a new bag with his name clearly written on the outside.

Darren arrived late. Mrs Johnson had taken the register and everyone was writing their names on their new books. Mrs Johnson gave a loud "tut" and told Darren to sit next to Craig. Craig did not look impressed. Darren's uniform was obviously handed down from someone else. His lunchbox was a plastic (name of local supermarket) bag and his PE bag was a (name of another supermarket) bag.

At lunchtime, Darren opened his (supermarket) bag and found the crumpled slices of bread he'd put in there, but where were his crisps?

"Perhaps they fell out when I tripped getting off the bus," Darren thought.

In the afternoon, they had PE and Mrs Johnson checked that everyone had their name tapes sewn in. "Well done, Craig," she said, "tell your mum we're very pleased when everything is labelled."

When she came to Darren's (supermarket) bag, she sniffed. The white T-shirt was grey; the shorts were too big; the trainers were scuffed; and nothing had Darren's name in.

"Sorry, Mrs Johnson, Mum was busy with the new baby."

Things got even worse for Darren when not only did his crisps go missing, but things began to go missing from other people's lunch boxes and trays. Then one day, he opened his tray to find the empty wrapper from a Mars bar and Jenny had told Mrs Johnson that she had lost a Mars bar that day!

"Darren Wilson! How dare you steal things from other people?"

Darren tried to say that he didn't steal, that he had had things stolen from him, but he could not get the words out.

Mrs Johnson told him to go and see the headteacher, Miss Clarke, and "see what she has to say about this!" He knocked at the door and a voice said, "Come in".

Darren gave Miss Clarke the note from Mrs Johnson.

"Now Darren, I want you to think very carefully before you answer. Did you steal those things?"

Darren did not need to think for long. "No, Miss. I didn't. I wouldn't! I've ..."

Darren was really cross with himself because tears kept coming to his eyes.

Miss Clarke told him to sit down and take his time.

And then he told her how he had had his crisps stolen nearly every day but he hadn't said anything to anyone. He didn't want to get anyone into trouble and he knew Mum would go mad because they did not have a lot of money anyway and she would think he was just being careless.

Miss Clarke did not say anything for a while.

"Darren, whoever is doing this needs to learn that it is wrong. I think you might have to help them by helping me to find out who it is."

Darren wasn't so sure but didn't say anything. Then he said, "I don't know if it's important, Miss, but... well, Craig always seems to have the same crisps as I bring. And I don't think his mum buys (name a cheap brand) like my mum."

Miss Clarke smiled. "I know that wasn't easy, Darren. Don't worry, let me deal with this now."

That afternoon, Miss Clarke visited the class as they got ready for PE. "Just a spot check on name tapes," she said.

Darren gave Miss Clarke his (supermarket) bag. She looked at the, still unnamed, clothes. "Mum still being kept awake by the baby?" she asked. Darren nodded gratefully and beamed, "Yes Miss, three times we were up with her last night!"

"Craig, can I see your things, please?"

"Erm... I forgot them."

"Craig, I can see the bag with your name on, let me see it please."

Inside Craig's bag were his bright white T-shirt and just the right sized shorts and ...

4. Activity

Young ones

What is Miss Clarke going to find in the bag? What could happen next?

Ask the children to think of something good that they would like God to notice them doing. Invite them to draw this on the T-shirt template.

Juniors

What is going to happen next? What do the children think should happen to Craig? What did Miss Clarke mean by helping him to learn that this was wrong? Help the children to see that doing something wrong is not the end, but can lead to repentance and forgiveness.

Invite the children to think of some of the qualities God looks for in people: kindness, sincerity, gentleness, etc and to write some of them on the T-shirt template

Tips for learning difficulties

Talk about how some people seem good on the outside but make us feel uncomfortable inside... and the other way round. Invite the children to draw a person who feels good on the outside and on the inside onto their tee-shirt template.

5. We come together

Parents can be invited to join in at this stage.

Focus

Light the candle – and add a plastic carrier bag from a local supermarket.

Gospel

Much of Jewish Law was very sensible – surgeons still wash up to the elbow as described in the Gospel. The problem was that people had begun to focus on the Law and not what it really meant. They were more concerned with following the letter of the Law and not necessarily thinking about what lay behind it. They allowed human thinking to become more important than what God actually wanted.

Prayer

Jesus, you ask us not just to do what you tell us
but to become people who love,
who forgive, and reconcile people to you.

When we are tempted to believe what we see on the surface –
remind us to look more deeply,
so that we see clearly and truly
what a person is really like. Amen.

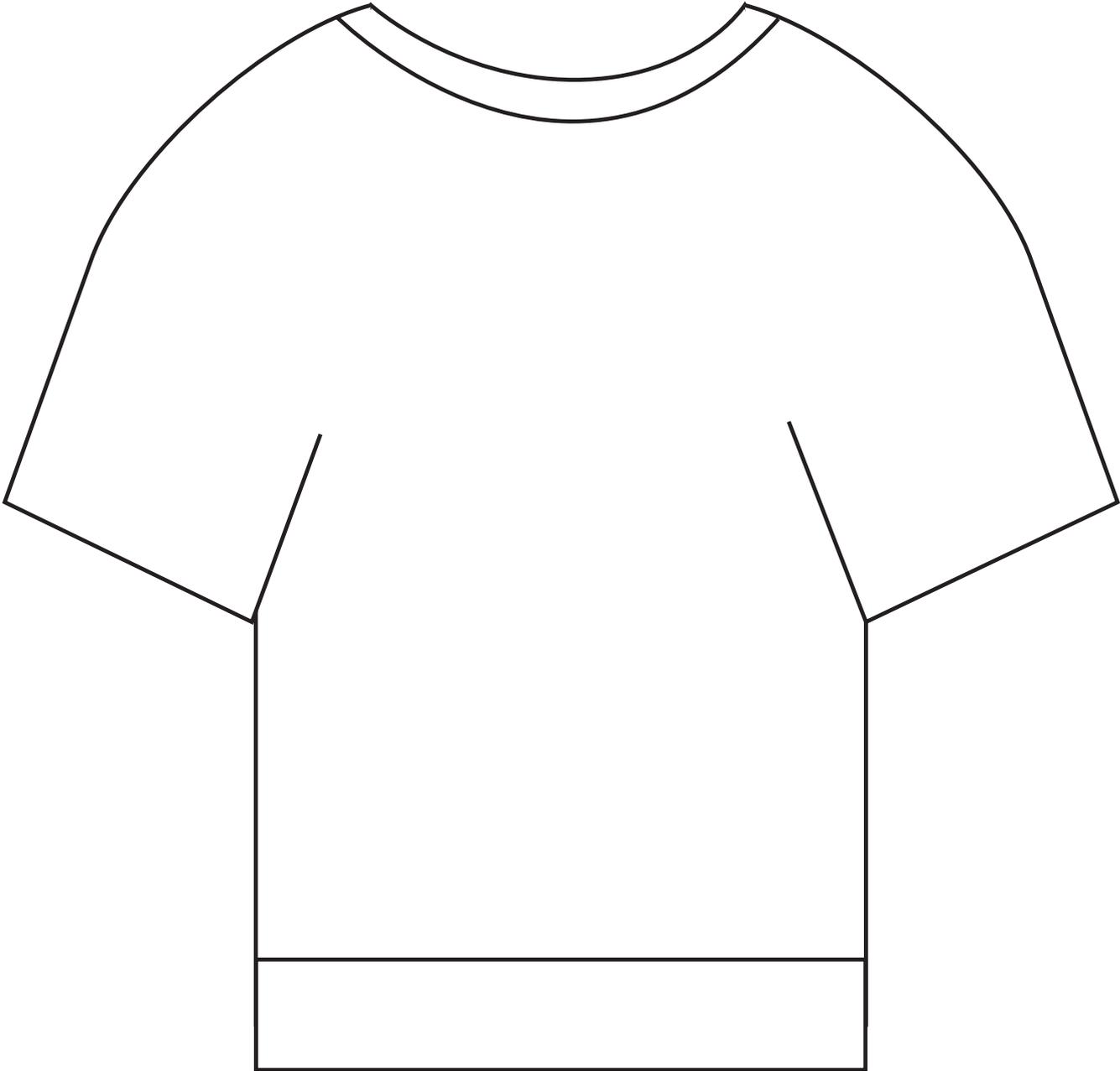
Share

In this session we have thought about someone who seemed to be perfect on the outside – but was not so good on the inside. This could apply to any of us. Ask the children to put all the good things they hope God sees in them into the bag and draw out the significance of this.

Sing

“God’s Spirit is in my heart”





23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proper 18

1. Introduction to the theme of the day

“Our ears will be open”

Aim: Today we focus on hearing God’s message. We hear in the readings that God will open our ears, and make us whole. Let us try to understand how best to hear what God is saying to us.

Leader’s Reflection: God calls out to us, and God gives us the equipment we need to hear his voice. In the readings for today, we hear how Jesus cured a man of deafness. But God’s real gift goes far beyond healing physical deafness, as the reading from Isaiah makes clear. God reaches out and touches us, so that we can hear and understand and celebrate the glory of his love. How can we hear God better?

2. We arrive

We sit in a circle, ready to listen to the Gospel.

Focus

A candle with matches ready to light.

When everyone is ready, ask them whether you can hear a candle burning. Ask them to sit very quietly and listen, as you light the candle. Sit in silence, for a few moments, and listen as hard as you can. Listen as the candle is blown out and lit again.

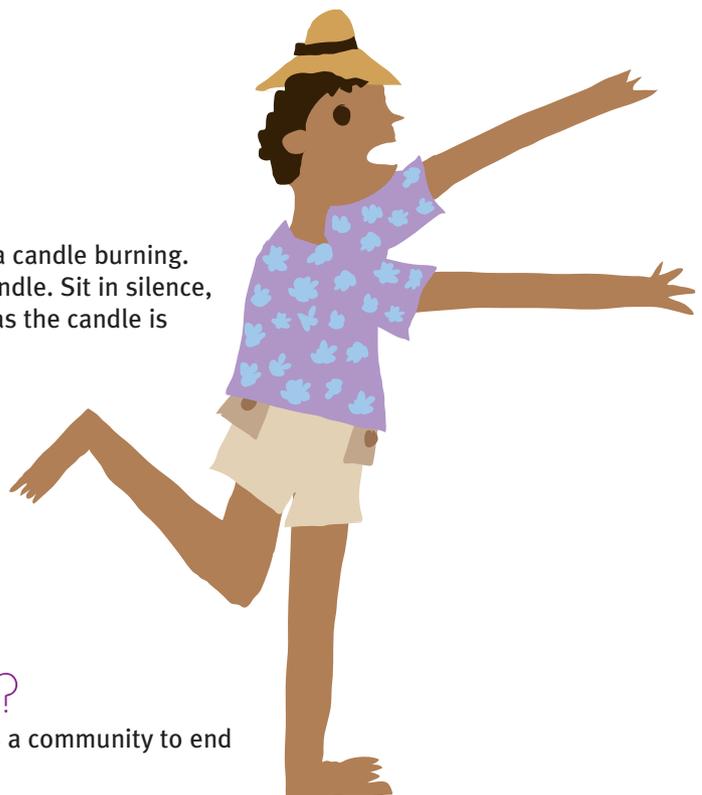
Gospel: Mark 7:31-37

Read from the Lectionary or the Children’s Lectionary.

3. We respond

What is the Gospel asking of us?

Work in age groups if appropriate. Then come together as a community to end the session.



Young ones

Ask: Could you hear the candle burning? What did you hear? Perhaps it was the wick fizzing when the candle was lit, or tiny creaks the wick makes, or the plop of wax falling, or the pop when the flame goes out. You have to listen hard to hear some things. And if you were in a rush, you might not listen hard enough to hear them. God gives us ears to hear his voice, but we have to listen hard.

Story

Will had a problem. He could hear, very well. But he never learned to talk. Some people don't, you know. They never work out what words mean. Will's mother was very sad. "How will he know how much we love him?" she said. But Will was very clever. Of course he knew his mother loved him!

One day, his mother had to go to the hospital. She was very ill, and Will wasn't allowed to visit her, only to talk on the telephone. Well, how could he tell his mother how much he loved her on a telephone, when he couldn't

talk? But he knew how! He made the sound of kisses, plopping on her cheek. He made the sound you make when you get a lovely treat: "Mmmmm!" He made excited noises: "Ooooh! Ooooh! Ooooooh!" And he made the noise that says "There, there, soon the pain will go." Will's mum was so happy. At last she understood. He knew how to hear her love in little sounds that most of us hardly notice.

He was a very good listener indeed.

Juniors

Encourage the children to think about what would be missing, if they couldn't hear. Imagine if you couldn't hear the school bell calling you to lessons, or if you couldn't hear the secret that your friend wanted to tell you, or your mother or father telling you that they love you. But sometimes, even people with very good ears don't hear things properly, because they are not really listening. God gives us the tools we need to find him, but we have to pay attention!

Story

Now, think back: how many times have you seen a kettle boil? I'll bet it's hundreds of times. And I'll bet you know just how a kettle sounds when it boils, too: first it sort of rumbles, then it gurgles harder and harder, and steam comes hissing out of the spout. But have you ever really stopped to listen to the water boil? And have you ever really stopped to try to understand what all those sounds mean?

Here's a true story about one boy, who really did listen to a kettle. I forget his name, but that doesn't matter. He lived a long time ago, before there were machines for doing this and that, before there were cars, even before there were trains.

In those days, people didn't have electric kettles. Well, they wouldn't have been much use, as no one had discovered electricity yet. Instead, people had big old metal kettles that sat on the stove or right in the fire (you've guessed, nobody had central heating, so they kept a warm fire burning). You can still see kettles like that in the shops. On the spout there's a little cap, like a hat, that whistles when the steam starts to hiss. You have to lift that little cap off to pour the water out.

This boy I've told you about thought his mother's kettle was very interesting. He'd sit and listen to the noises it made for hours. Why did it do that? It puzzled him. And while he was listening, he noticed something interesting:

if you leave the kettle on the fire even after the water has boiled, the steam gets stronger and stronger, and it can even blow that little cap right off the spout – it can blow it right across the kitchen!

Well, of course, everyone knew all about that, which is why they hurried to take the kettle off the fire when it started to boil. You wouldn't want to have that little hot cap flying all over the place like a bullet breaking things, now would you? But this boy worked out something no one else had ever thought of. He realised what the kettle was saying. It was saying: steam is power! Look, it can move things! And that boy went on to invent machines that used steam; machines that people used to make trains and all sorts of things, and he changed the whole world.

I suppose Jesus listened to God just as carefully as that boy listened to his mother's kettle, and Jesus changed the world even more.



4. Activity

Young ones

Use the template of a boy cupping his hand to his ear. What is he listening to? Draw and colour something special we can hear, like Will.

Juniors

Think of all the ways God speaks to us. Make a poster.

Tips for learning difficulties

Ideas like listening or concentrating are difficult for those with learning difficulties to understand. Help the child to notice first the loud sounds in the room, and then the quieter ones, such as the sound of crayons colouring, or someone's breathing. Focus: listening carefully.

5. We come together

Parents can be invited to join in at this stage.

Focus

The lighted candle, the posters and pictures made in the activities.

Gospel

God says: "I want everyone to hear my message of love. I will help you open your ears. Listen and you will hear me."

Prayer

Dear Lord, help us to hear your voice in everything we do today and every day. We thank you, we praise you for all your love for us. Amen.

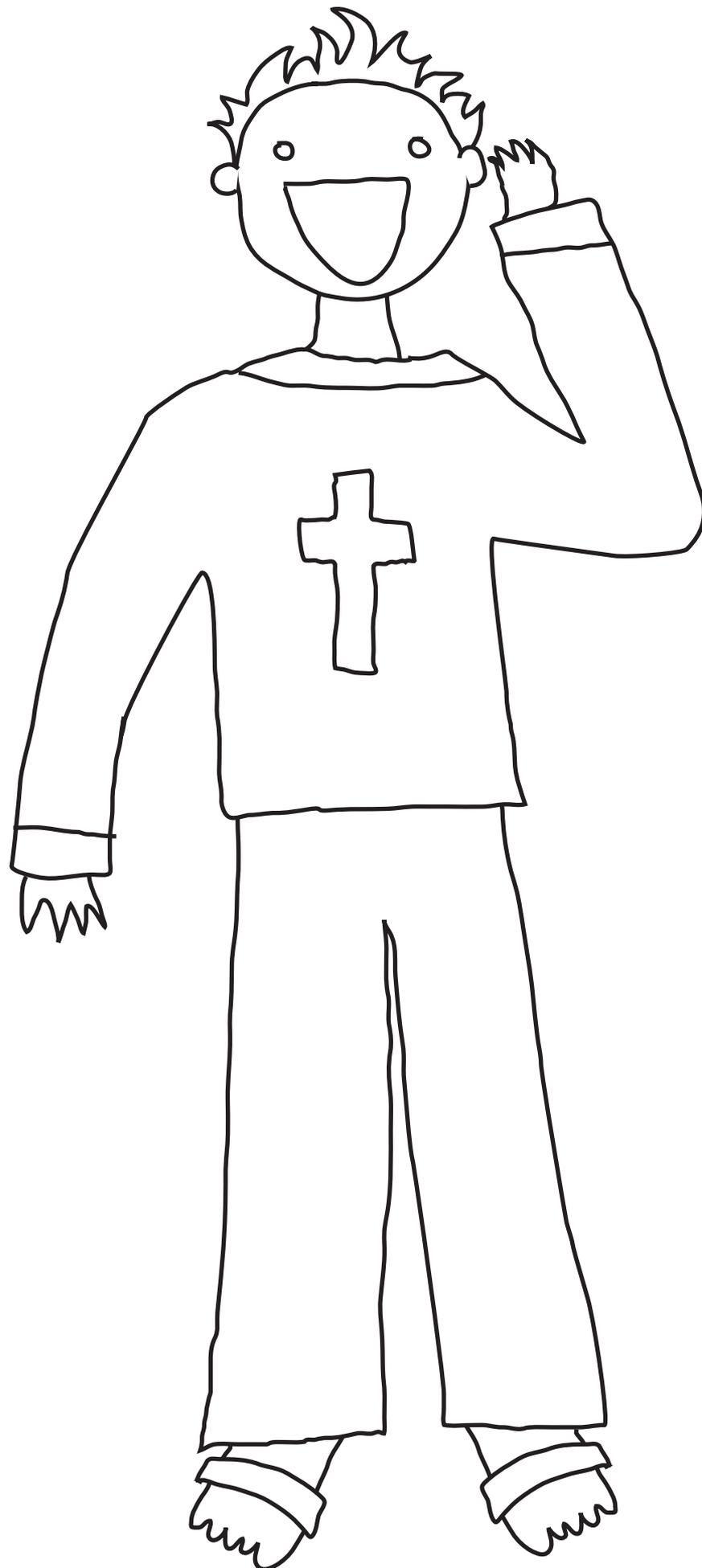
Share

Share the work from the activities.

Sing

"Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising."





24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proper 19

1. Introduction to the theme of the day

“Who do you say I am?”

Aim: To think about the virtue of integrity. Jesus was a man of integrity, but it was not always easy for him.

Leader's Reflection: Jesus was a man of integrity. Integrity is a very particular virtue, but it is difficult to describe in a few words. It means wholeness, completeness, without a flaw, without anything missing. If we say a person has integrity we mean that who they are, what they believe, what they say and what they do are all the same thing. They are trustworthy and reliable and they stand by their word. Like the writing in a stick of rock, their values are written all through them and show up in everything they do.

2. We arrive

We sit in a circle ready to listen to the Gospel.

Focus

A lighted candle, green fabric for ordinary time, big word on a card – INTEGRITY.

Gospel: Mark 8:27-35

Read from the Lectionary or the Children's Lectionary.

3. We respond

What is the Gospel asking of us?

We think about how hard it was, sometimes, for Jesus to be God. Juniors should listen to the story with the young ones today, before starting their own work.



Young ones

Story

Peter was feeling pretty pleased with himself. Ever since he first met Jesus, he had been sure there was something special about him, and now he knew he had been right!

Jesus had asked them a few minutes ago who they thought he was. Everybody had gone very quiet and started mumbling things about Jesus being very nice and very kind, and being their best friend, and their leader and all that sort of thing.

But Peter could see that Jesus was waiting for them to say something extra, something a bit different, so he said it: "I think you are God," he said, and Jesus had turned to him with a solemn look on his face and said that he was right!

Oh yes, Peter was feeling very pleased with himself. But Jesus was still talking ... what was he saying? "... and when we get to Jerusalem, the soldiers will arrest me, and beat me, and kill me by nailing me to a cross".

Absolutely not! No way José! Not if Peter had anything to do with it they wouldn't! Jesus was his best friend, and he was God. Those soldiers would have to get past Peter and his mates before they so much as laid a finger on Jesus. "I won't let them!" he bellowed angrily at Jesus. Jesus turned to him sadly, "You are wrong, Peter," he said, "you of all people. You know that I am God but most people don't, and they won't like it very much when I tell them."

"So, don't tell them," muttered Peter crossly.

"Be quiet!" said Jesus very sharply. "I can't stop being God just because people don't like it, or because they beat me up for it, or even kill me. And if you want me to pretend that I am not God, then you are not my friend." Poor old Peter. Top of the class one minute, and now being sent away in disgrace. Being friends with Jesus was sometimes very confusing. Peter had a lot of thinking to do.

Juniors

Story

Jesus was a man of integrity. Integrity is a virtue, a good thing to have, but it is difficult to describe in a few words. It means being whole or complete, without anything missing. If we say a person has integrity we mean that who they are, what they believe, what they say and what they do are all the same thing. A bit like the writing in a stick of rock, the things they believe are written all through them and show up in everything they do.

Jesus was a man of integrity. He knew who he was: he was God and man. He knew what he believed in; he believed God loved him. And he wanted to share that belief with other people, even if it made him unpopular and the people wanted to kill him. We often think of Jesus as just being good, as if that was easy for him, but there are at least three times in the Gospel when we are told how hard it was for him to choose to be good, to be God, to behave with integrity.

The first was when he spent 40 days in the desert and the devil tempted him to use "being God" to make his life easier. Jesus said that being God was not about having an easy life.

Today we read about the second time when Peter tried to persuade him that being God was too dangerous – he should play safe and try to protect himself so the people would not kill him. Jesus said that "playing safe" was not a thing God does.

The third was in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus wanted to run away from being crucified. In the end, Jesus said that being God meant that he loved people like God loved them, and he couldn't run away from them; if that meant he would be crucified, then that must be a part of being God as well.

Behaving with integrity takes a lot of courage, even for Jesus.

4. Activity

Young ones

Peter has made Jesus sad by saying that he should pretend not to be God so that the people will like him more. Help Peter to draw a card, or write a letter to Jesus to say “Sorry”.

Juniors

Integrity is a virtue: a good way of behaving which is easily recognisable in the people around us. It is also one of the words we use to describe God. One of his titles in the Old Testament is “The Lord my Integrity”.

Can all of the words we use to describe God be used to describe people as well?

Jesus had to find a way of being God – which meant being all the things that God is, whilst still being a man. On the chart on the template page, write down any words which you can use to describe God, and then, in the second column, words which can be used to describe people. Why was it so hard for Jesus to be God and man?

Tips for learning difficulties

Children can use pictures to illustrate God’s characteristics – of people doing good things, beautiful scenery, magnificence etc.

5. We come together

Parents can be invited to join in at this stage.

Focus

Gather around the candle and the word.

Gospel

Jesus asked his friends who they thought he was. Peter said, “You are God.”

Prayer

Dear Jesus, you are God, and you wanted to behave like God all the time, but sometimes that was very hard. Peter was your friend, and he wanted to behave like your friend all the time, but sometimes that was very hard for him as well. We are your friends, and we want to behave like your friends all the time, but sometimes that is very hard for us too. Help us when we find it hard. Amen.

Share

The children can show the work they have been doing today.

Sing

“Jesus is God”

“Jesus, you are Lord”





**What is
God like?**

**What are
people like?**



A large dashed-line grid structure for writing, consisting of a vertical line and a horizontal line that intersect at the top center, forming two columns and two rows.

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