

Week 4: 'Being freed from that which divides us' (3rd Sunday in Lent, Year A - Sunday 27th February 2005)

FOCUS FOR THE LEADER:

Jesus saw, heard and responded to others with openness and love. Why is it that so often we feel the need to judge others? We are challenged to overcome that which divides us: prejudices, insecurities, excessive competitiveness, etc. Our Christian faith calls us to love all people regardless of their beliefs. Faith differences need to be respected.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN



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At Your Word, Lord programme

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

GOSPEL: John 4:5-42

In this week's Gospel, we hear a story about a spring welling up to eternal life.

Breaking open the Gospel:

- Ask the children if they have ever been really thirsty; or if they have ever been without water for some reason. Ask them if they remember the stories in the news last summer of the storms in Cornwall and in Florida. Although there was water everywhere – in the rain and in the floods – people were worried about having enough safe drinking water. People can get very sick if they drink dirty water. Remind them how important water is, how we need water to live (to drink, to wash, to cook) and how animals and plants need water too.
- In this week's Gospel, Jesus tells a story about how he asks a woman for water and then talks about a different kind of water – living water. He says that anyone who drinks this water will never be thirsty again. The woman asks him for this living water. Jesus is talking about the life that God gives. This life, or grace, is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who fills us with his love, happiness and goodness. Now, Jesus was talking to a Samaritan woman. Jews like Jesus did not talk to Samaritans; they thought they were better than Samaritans. So, the woman was surprised that Jesus would talk to her and would offer her anything.
- You might have a *hot seat* exercise for your activity. Get one child to be the woman and one to be Jesus. Get the children to ask the woman and

Jesus questions like, “Woman, how did it feel when you realised who you were talking to?” or “Jesus, how did you know the woman had so many husbands?” and “Woman, why were you surprised when Jesus asked you water and then he offered you the water?” Encourage the children to enter the story by asking as many questions as possible. Consider changing the woman and Jesus in the hot seat so that more children get the chance to see things from another point of view. Ask the children if they know people who go to different churches or people who are of different faiths. Remind the children how Jesus was talking to the woman in the story; Jesus' message of love goes out to all people of all shapes and sizes, ages and colours, rich and poor. Say we, as Christians and disciples of Jesus, are asked to do the same.



- Ask the children what they know about baptism and the water used in baptism. Ask them if they know that when they were baptised, they became Christians, followers of Christ. Remind them that, when they come into the church, they dip their fingers into holy water and make the sign of the cross. They do this to remember that they are baptised people. Consider having a bowl of holy water as your focal point. Invite the children to come forward to dip their fingers into the water and bless themselves.

A Creed – a series of questions to which the children are invited to reply, “We do.”

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

- Do you believe in the Holy, Catholic Church, where we come to learn about God?
- Do you believe that God is asking us to share our faith with those around us?

Intercessions

Jesus has told us to ask God for what we need, so as God's children, we pray

- for the Church throughout the world, that we see ourselves honestly the way God sees us, we ask. *Response: Lord, hear our prayer.*
- for God's beautiful world, that we look after it with loving care, we ask. *Response: Lord, hear our prayer.*
- for all those who are hungry or sad, lonely or sick, we ask *Response: Lord, hear our prayer.*
- For all who live in our parish who need our prayers, we ask *Response: Lord, hear our prayer.*

Father, we ask you to listen to these prayers
In the name of Jesus, Our Lord. Amen

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

Gospel Acclamation 2 for Lent Martin Foster



Praise. to... you, Lord Je - sus Christ, Son of the Fa - ther, Word of God.

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GOSPEL: John 4:5-42

In this week's Gospel, we hear a story about a spring welling up to eternal life.

Breaking open the Gospel:

- Ask the children if they have ever been really thirsty; or if they have ever been without water for some reason. Ask them if they remember the stories in the news last summer of the storms in Cornwall and in Florida. Although there was water everywhere – in the rain and in the floods – people were worried about having enough safe drinking water. People can get very sick if they drink dirty water. Remind them how water is a sign of life and, without it, everything would die. Ask them if they have ever grown a seed or a bulb at home or at school. Ask how important it was to water it; if they forgot to water it, it died.
- In this week's Gospel, Jesus tells a story about how he asks a woman for water and then he gives her water. The water Jesus was talking about was the water of new life. Remind the children that, before they were born, they were in the waters of their mother's womb. Then they were born into a new life in the world. Tell them that when they were baptised, they were born into another new life – the life of Christ, the life of being a Christian, a

follower of Jesus. This is the new life Jesus was offering the woman. The woman became a follower of his and she told everyone about him so that they could also be his followers.

- Ask the children to think about the ways that they are followers of Jesus. Ask them if they invite others – perhaps those who are different from them – to join in their games at school, for example. Ask them if they share their sweets and their toys at home; ask if they do as they are told and if they tell the truth. Ask what they do at church to remember that they are baptised. Remind them that we bless ourselves with holy water when we arrive at church. Tell that that this is a reminder that we are baptised people.
- Consider having a bowl of holy water as your focal point. Take the bowl around to each child. Like the woman in the story who wanted some of that special water, ask Jesus for what you want from him. Allow the children to pray aloud or silently. (If there is a big group, you might transfer the water in the large bowl to some smaller bowls and a few catechists can bring bowls among the group. Another alternative would be to invite the children to come forward.)



A Creed – a series of questions to which the children are invited to reply, “We do.”

- Do you believe that God loves you very much?
- Do you believe that Jesus came to tell us what God is like?
- Do you believe that we come to church to learn about God?

Intercessions

Jesus has told us to ask God for what we need, so as God's children, we pray

- for all God's family so that we may share the Good News with everyone. *Lord, in your mercy; hear our prayer.*
- for God's beautiful world that we look after it with loving care. *Lord, in your mercy; hear our prayer.*
- for all who are hungry or sad, lonely or sick, today we pray for . . . *Lord, in your mercy; hear our prayer.*

Loving Father, we ask you to listen to these prayers in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen