

Week 5: 'God's Presence in the Human Family' (4th Sunday in Lent, Year A - Sunday 6th March 2005)

FOCUS FOR THE LEADER:

There are those among us who may feel like outcasts in our world today, those with AIDS, the homeless, the poor, undocumented immigrants, those who encounter racial prejudice, and many others. Jesus invites us to new birth, to hear the call of those in need. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, we can be reconciled.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

GOSPEL: John 9:1-41

In this week's Gospel, we hear a story about how a blind man went off and washed himself, and came away with his sight restored.

Breaking open the Gospel:

- Ask the children if they have ever been blind to doing a crossword puzzle or a maths question or even how to spell a word. Ask if someone helped them to see, to make it clear, to help them to understand. Ask them what it was like for them to be helped, what it was like to suddenly understand what it was they were so baffled by. Ask them if they have ever been blindfolded and had to rely on someone else to help them to find their way. Get them to talk in two's about their experience.



- In today's Gospel, we hear about how Jesus cures a blind man. The man was blind from the time he was born. He doesn't ask to be cured; Jesus sees the man and decides to help

the man. Jesus spat on the earth making some mud and put it on the man's eyes. Then he told the man to go and wash his eyes. The man trusted Jesus and did as he was told and suddenly he could see. The people around were blind to the power of Jesus and what he could do. Sometimes we are blind too. Sometimes we are blind to the help we need to ask for and the help we should be offering to others. We need to hear the call of those in need; we need to try and see who those people are in need around us.

- Consider blindfolding some of the children to help them realise what it like to be blind. If you have a small group, you might consider dividing the whole group into two's; in each pair, one person would be blindfolded and one would be able to see. If it is a large group, you might choose ten children and have five pairs. The blindfolded one will rely on the help of the one who can see to be led around the hall. You might make a little bit of an obstacle course (being careful, of course, of safety issues). Talk to the children about the homeless and the poor, people who come here from other countries in search of freedom, people who want to work, who want their children to go to school, who need doctors and hospitals to cure their illnesses. Many of these people cannot speak English. They come to a new country and need help to see how things work here. Ask the children if they can imagine how difficult it must be to come to a new country and not be able to speak the language! The children may be aware of some of these people; they may see homeless living in their area, they may know poor children and they may know immigrants. Ask them if they can see what it must be like for them.
- The blind man in today's gospel accepted the gift Jesus gave to him of his sight and he said he believed in him. In our creed, we say what we believe. Invite the children to think about what they are saying when they say the creed.

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

- Do you believe that, though we are many, we are one body in God's love?
- Do you believe that Jesus came to tell us to love all people, to reach out to all those in need?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps us to understand what God is like?
- 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, remember

- all Christian Churches in the world – that together we may be able to proclaim God's great love for all people in Jesus Christ, we pray. *Response: Lord, hear our prayer.*
- God's beautiful world, that we look after it with loving care, we pray. *Response: Lord, hear our prayer.*
- all those who are hungry or sad, lonely or sick, we pray. *Response: Lord, hear our prayer.*
- all who live in our parish who need our prayers, we pray. *Response: Lord, hear our prayer.*

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

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:



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GOSPEL: John 9:1-41

In this week's Gospel, we hear a story about how a blind man went off and washed himself, and came away with his sight restored.

Breaking open the Gospel:

- Ask the children if they have ever been blindfolded, if they couldn't see what they were doing. Ask what it would be like to be given different foods, different sweets when they couldn't see them. Ask if they think they would be able to identify what they were. You might get two children to volunteer to help – one could be blindfolded and the other might be asked to give the child a few things to eat, inviting the blindfolded one to say what the things are. (Check first with the parents of the child to make sure he/she can eat the things you are offering!) Get them to talk in two's about their experience.
- In today's Gospel, we hear about how Jesus cures a blind man. The man was blind from the time he was born. He doesn't ask to be cured; Jesus sees the man and decides to help the man. Jesus spat on the earth making some



mud and put it on the man's eyes. Then he told the man to go and wash his eyes. The man trusted Jesus and did as he was told and suddenly he could see. The people around were blind. They could not see that it was Jesus who cured the blind man. They did not want to see it. Tell the children that sometimes we are blind too. We do not always notice the child who wants to play with us, the one who doesn't have so many friends; sometimes we do not see that one of our classmates needs help to understand something or needs help to read – we don't see. The blind man let Jesus heal him; he let Jesus help him. Ask the children to think about things they don't see and get them to ask Jesus to help them to see. Get them to ask Jesus to help them to see people the way he sees them.

- This Sunday is Mothering Sunday. Ask the children how they see their mothers. You might ask them to make a Mother's Day card.

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*