

Children's Liturgy guide

Fifth Sunday of Lent (Year C)

John 8:1-11

An amazing encounter between Jesus, a woman, the Pharisees and the Teachers of the Law. A trap was set for Jesus and the woman and her actions were the bait. Jesus did not fall into this trap but instead taught the Pharisees, the Teachers of the Law, and us, a valuable lesson.

Sharing Scripture

It's fair to say that this passage is not easy to share with children as the subject matter speaks of adultery and crowds wanting to see a woman stoned to death! The deeper teaching of this account is about our standing before God. That we have all sinned and need forgiveness. We have no right to judge someone else's position before God when we need forgiveness just as much.

You will know your children best and therefore will know how to pitch the explanation of what adultery is or by just referring to it as 'something wrong that the law said she should be punished for', but please share the account from Luke 8:1-11 majoring on the warmth of Jesus and his just nature. Explain that the gruesome act of stoning someone was literally throwing stones at them until they died (again omit depending on what you feel your children can understand).

Explain that the Pharisees and the Teachers of the Law thought they were above everyone else in society. They wanted to trap Jesus in his teaching because the law said that both man and woman should be punished (and, in fact, killed for committing adultery with a woman betrothed to someone else) for their sin. They only brought the woman and publicly shamed her and asked Jesus what should be done. In denying the punishment, Jesus would be denying the law but in letting her be stoned to death, Jesus would be denying God's power to forgive.

Jesus actually upheld both the law and the new covenant of forgiveness. He flipped their question and asked them, 'If you are without sin, you throw the first stone'. Not one of them could stand there and honestly say that they were perfect and without sin. Therefore, Jesus turned and spoke to the women and said 'no-one is left and I do not condemn you either, go and leave your life of sin'. Jesus did not make sin ok but wanted this woman (who was probably looked down on by everyone) to know that her life and any sinful actions could be forgiven and she was accepted no matter what her position in society.

SCIAF

Scripture inspires SCIAF's work and this passage is right up there for how SCIAF look to Jesus and mirror His actions. Unfortunately, across the world, society believes that some people are worth more than others and because of this, we see massive injustice.

SCIAF is determined to follow Christ's example, and the example of Catholic Social Teaching that promotes the principles of dignity, solidarity and more.

If you have the resource to show a video clip, please show the children SCIAF's 'Catholic Social Teaching in three minutes' video [here](#).

This is only a dip into Catholic Social Teaching but it gives a strong platform to help children understand that serving people is not about doing everything for someone; it is about dignity and empowering people to help themselves. SCIAF does not exist to judge and condemn but to show dignity and fight injustice. Exactly what Jesus did in this encounter in John 8.

Just giving someone food instead of showing dignity and understanding that they can grow their own food or run a business is the wrong way to help. Unless it's an emergency (where emergency food is necessary), SCIAF works with our partners around the world to provide a dignified, long-term solution.

Respond

The teaching that the children need to leave knowing is that the wrong they do can be forgiven and God can help them, as they're tempted in the future. Jesus did not condemn the women but He did tell her to 'go on her way and to sin no more'. We are forgiven so our life and subsequent actions should reflect that gift.

Collect a number of smooth stones (one each) that are large enough for each child to write a word or two on. Hand a stone to each child and ask them to write 'My sin' on it. Alternatively, you can ask the children to write a type of sin on it. For example, you might have a number of stones with 'hate', 'stealing', 'racism', or 'greed' on them.

When each child has a stone with something written on them, symbolically throw these stones into a bucket of water as a sign that these sins can be forgiven by God.

This act should really emphasise that sin can be dealt with and that the sin that they hold in hand (on the stone) does not need to stay with them and can be thrown away.

Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund

SCIAF is the official relief and development agency of the Catholic Church in Scotland and a proud member of the Caritas family. 7 West Nile Street, Glasgow G12PR. Tel: 0141 354 5555. Scottish Charity No: SC012302. Company No: SC197327

