

Children's Liturgy guide

Fourth Sunday of Lent (Year C)

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

The parable of the Lost Son is one of most famous stories in the Bible. Often, we focus only on the son who left, wasted his inheritance, and came back and was welcomed by the father. He messed up, repented, returned and was forgiven and accepted. Let's not forget the lesson that comes from the attitude of the older brother. Although he stayed with his father, he was not a model example. Filled with bitterness, he could not accept his father's decision to welcome his brother back. The story is of God's grace rather than how good we are.

Sharing Scripture – Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

I always find drama very useful in remembering Scripture, so I suggest you read the parable and ask for volunteers to act out what you read. Nominate a younger brother, older brother and a father. Feed the actors the lines from Scripture and bring the story to life. No rehearsal is required, it is supposed to be spontaneous.

Ask the children what they think of the story. Would they forgive the younger son? Do they think they might have reacted like the older brother? Who does the father represent?

Explain to the children that even though the older brother stayed with his father, he isn't a shining example to them. The older brother is judgemental, thinks that he is in the right, and cannot accept his father's decision.

The two sons are loved and accepted based on their father's love for them, not because of their perfect behaviour.

Make sure that you emphasise that our heavenly Father is like the father in the parable. He loves them, forgives them and calls them His children. No matter what they have done or said, God's grace is more than sufficient.

SCIAF

In the parable, we see that the lost son spent his Father's money, and then came a famine. He worked feeding pigs and he longed to eat the food he was feeding the pigs. He must have been hungry! Unfortunately, going without food or very little food is an everyday occurrence for millions of people across the world.

Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund

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The Climate Emergency is happening now, and it's hurting the poorest people first. Julius and his family (their story is found in Week 1 of the Children's Liturgy) are at the forefront of the climate crisis. In southern Malawi, extreme weather events are destroying crops, flooding homes and leaving people hungry.

Families don't know how much food they will harvest, how much money they will make, or whether their children will go to school having eaten that morning.

Share the following facts with the children about Malawi. You could even get the children to read them aloud to each other –

- Around 80% of people in Malawi produce food to feed themselves and their families, and so the vast majority of people in the country are vulnerable to climate-related shocks and changes to rainfall patterns (World Bank).
- More than 9 million people are living below the poverty line in Malawi. That is living on less than £1.42 per day (World Bank).
- In early March 2019, Malawi experienced one of the worst tropical cyclones in the region's history, Cyclone Idai, bringing heavy rains and strong winds. Flooding severely impacted people's lives and livelihoods, and increased poverty levels. In total, an estimated 975,000 people were affected, with 125,000 left homeless. (Global Climate Risk Index, Germanwatch).

Respond

Remind the children that as a Church, especially during Lent, we come together and one of our responses is to give what we can financially to help support and empower our sisters and brothers who are facing difficulties. SCIAF have been responding to the needs of people from across the world since 1965 and together we can provide a lifeline to families on the front line of the Climate Emergency, lifting them from their hunger.

Ask the children what they can buy for £8. Some of the younger children might struggle with the concept of what £8 can buy, but you might want to suggest some things if you are not getting sensible answers. You might get a cinema ticket for £8. One pizza maybe? A book? One T-shirt?

After some suggestions reveal that £8 could provide seeds that cope better with the impacts of climate change such as floods and drought. This £8 could provide a family with food to eat and even crops to sell at market to earn money.

Finish by saying the following prayer –

We thank you God that you are a loving Father.
Even though we make mistakes, we thank you for your forgiveness.
We pray for all the people that don't have enough food to eat.
We pray for justice in this world.
Help us to look after creation and share what we have to help others.
Amen.

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