

4th Sunday of Lent (Year B)

John 3:14-21

John 3:16 is arguably the most famous piece of Scripture from the New Testament. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). This passage has filled many with hope and strength. It speaks to us of the love that God has for humanity and for all creation.

If we read on to verse 21, however, we know that simply feeling God's love is not enough. It says, "But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God" (Jn 3:21). This is the great challenge of the Gospel reading today—to not only know that God loves us, but to be a light in the darkness, reflecting and shining that love back on the world.

Sharing Scripture

Materials required:

+ Torch (ensure it is working)

Show the children the torch and ask them what its purpose is? When might they use a torch? Explain that a torch provides light in the darkness; it reveals what we can otherwise not see. It helps us to find things, see things, and most importantly, light the way when we are surrounded by darkness. The light from a torch can provide comfort when we are afraid or relief when we are lost.

In the Gospel reading today, Jesus talks about darkness and light. He says we must act as a light and shine brightly into the dark places. Our works and our words will be like the torch—providing help and comfort to those living in darkness.

Unfortunately, we know that sometimes people *prefer* to live in darkness because it allows them to hide their sins and avoid facing the consequences of their actions. Jesus tells us that we must shine our light here too. We can do this by speaking out against injustices or supporting our sisters and brothers who are purposefully excluded and treated unfairly.

We don't have to look far to find examples and opportunities to put this into practice. Maybe we can share a kind word and include a classmate who is feeling left out? Perhaps we can speak up when we hear a friend say unkind words or spread gossip? No matter if we shine our light in big or small ways, we can have confidence that it matters. Even the smallest torch can make the biggest difference when surrounded by darkness.

SCIAF

As the official international aid agency for the Catholic Church in Scotland, SCIAF helps to shine a light on injustices happening around the world. We do this by working with partners to address the needs of those living in poverty and sharing their stories with people here in Scotland. We help to raise awareness of the issues affecting our sisters and brothers and to put pressure on leaders to make necessary changes to help improve their lives.

Share with the children the story of 'Vaida' (shared at the end of this document) to learn how she has been helped by SCIAF and our partners in South Sudan. If you have the technology, you may also like to share the 'WEE BOX BIG CHANGE Lent 2021' video.

Respond

End your time with the children by praying the WEE BOX prayer for children in South Sudan.

**Loving God,
Thank you for the beauty of your creation
and for all the good things you graciously give us.
We pray for more understanding of the differences between peoples
and a recognition that we are all one in Christ.
Thank you for making us all unique but all created in your image.
Help us look to Jesus as an example
of someone who broke down barriers that excluded.
Give us the strength and wisdom to work together
and bring about positive change for those that are suffering.
God of compassion, hear our prayer.
Amen**

Vaida

This Lent, SCIAF is working with our partners in South Sudan to support disabled children and young people. Meet Vaida, a 16-year-old girl who has been helped by our partners at Sudan Evangelical Mission (SEM).



Photo Credit Achuo Deng

Vaida, who features in your WEE BOX pack, was just 14 when she became paralysed and completely dependent on her family. After years of war and instability South Sudan has little infrastructure to provide even emergency medical treatment for children with disabilities, let alone the long-term care required for a child like Vaida to live a healthy, happy life.

Angelina, Vaida's mum spent months going back and forth to hospitals to no avail. One day, Vaida's family heard about a programme being run by our partner organisation in South Sudan which was able to provide Vaida with the medical support she needed. Vaida was also provided with an elbow crutch for support during short walks and a tricycle for longer distances that she uses to go from home to school.

As she gradually improved, Vaida worked on her balance, strength and coordination to improve her walking. She was provided with an elbow crutch to support her while walking short distances. For longer distances, Vaida was given a hand-powered tricycle that she uses to go to school.

Vaida said that the support from SCIAF has changed her life. Now she has hope for the future. Before her treatment, she struggled to do even simple things by herself but now she is able to help with household chores, getting groceries from the market and is much more independent.

She said:

"I want to send my gratitude [to everyone who has helped me]; may God bless them and provide them abundantly so that they continue with their love and support.

"I am strong now; you have lifted me from the suffering. What encourages me is to have control over my life. To be able to work for myself. I want to become a doctor. I want to help like I was helped."