

5th Sunday of Lent (Year B)

John 12:20–33

The Gospel reading this week is rich with references to the Passion. Jesus speaks to the crowd that has gathered about how in dying, there is multiplied new life. Just as a single grain of wheat must 'die' in order to grow into an abundant plant, so too must Jesus die in order to bring us all salvation and new life. As Jesus says, "it was for this purpose that I came to this hour" (Jn 12:27).

We are also reminded of our own purpose in the Gospel reading today. Jesus explains that, "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be" (Jn 12:26). Therefore, we are called as Christians to follow Jesus' example – to 'die' to ourselves in order that we may serve others. This does not usually mean that we must literally give up our lives. Rather, we must set aside vanity, self-absorption and selfishness in order to live a life dedicated to others.

Sharing Scripture

Share with the children the Gospel reading, **John 12:20–33**. As you do, invite the children to use their imagination. Ask them to picture the scene where people are talking to Jesus and try to imagine how Jesus might have looked and sounded when He spoke.

Encourage the children to think about the passage by asking if they can think of a time that they put someone else's needs before their own? Maybe they let a younger sibling play with a favourite toy? Maybe they shared a snack with a pal? Perhaps they allowed others to go first in the queue? How did it make you feel?

The readings today speak of how Jesus put others before himself. He was the perfect example of a 'servant leader.' This means that Jesus understood that he did not come for the glory found on earth – fame and fortune. Instead, he came to serve others, to provide healing and comfort to the poor, to show the way to eternal life and ultimately, sacrifice himself for the good of humankind.

What if each of us walked the path of Jesus and came to understand the value in putting the good of others before our own success? Developing this habit of caring for others takes practice, but we should not be discouraged by this difficult task. The lives of the Saints can inspire us and show us how to truly walk the way of Jesus.

SCIAF

Share with the children the picture of SCIAF patron saint, Saint Óscar Romero.

Saint Óscar Romero dedicated his life to God and to serving his people in El Salvador, Romero's home country. In the 1970s, the people of El Salvador experienced a terribly violent civil war that lasted over 12 years. Romero spoke out against the violence committed by both sides and stood with the poor and the oppressed being caught in the middle of everything.

Despite facing many challenges, Romero never abandoned his people, his parish or his friends. He continued to speak out against the government and those causing violence, even after receiving death threats. Romero once said, "I will not abandon my people, rather I will run the same risks with them that my ministry requires."

On 24 March 1980, St Óscar Romero was martyred while celebrating Mass. He had refused to stop his priestly duties and deny others the gift of the Sacrament although he knew it would put his life at risk. This was the ultimate sacrifice for others that Romero could make. While we may never be asked to risk our own lives the way that St Óscar Romero was, we can all learn from his unwavering faith and true commitment to others.

Respond

Work with the children to make a list of small acts of kindness that they can do for others. In these small ways, each of them can put others first and follow Jesus' example. The list below can help get you started.

- + Tidying up toys
- + Helping with the washing-up after meals
- + Sharing with a sister, brother or a friend

Once you have made a short list, tell the children that you are going to ask God to help them do all of these things and more. Together we can build a better world for everyone.

Saint Óscar Romero was a true example of how to live for others. We pray that we may be inspired by his life, that we too may stand by the poor and the oppressed, sharing the love of Jesus with everyone we meet.

**Loving God,
Give us the strength to be humble, to be faithful,
to stand with our sisters and brothers.
Give us the strength to be like our brother, Óscar,
completely committed to Christ.
Saint Óscar Romero,
Pray for us.
Amen**