

## 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)

Share with the children the Gospel reading **John 3:14–21**. Explain that this reading tells of a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. As you read the passage ask the children to imagine what it would be like to have a conversation with Jesus like Nicodemus did. Ask them to picture the scene and imagine they are there.

Encourage the children to think about the passage by asking questions such as:

- + What do you think it means when Jesus says He must be “lifted up”?
- + What do you think it means to ‘prefer darkness to the light’?
- + Why do you think some people prefer darkness over light?

Imagine you’re in a really dark room, so dark that you can’t see anything and it’s really hard to find anything. When we do something unkind, like saying mean words or not sharing our toys, it’s like being in the dark room, and we might not realise how it hurts others or even ourselves. It’s easy to get lost and not know what’s right or wrong

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 Julien's story (below) with the children.

## **Respond**

End your time by saying the WEE BOX prayer:

**Loving Father, Merciful God, we worship You.  
You are a mighty God, far above the sin of this world,  
yet You choose to show compassion  
to each of us because You love us.**

**We remember the country of Rwanda.  
Bring your comfort to those who suffer  
and bring Your healing power in their lives.**

**Help us to show love in action  
to our sisters and brothers across the world.**

**Amen**

## Julien

This year's WEE BOX appeal focuses on SCIAF's work in Rwanda.

Though Rwanda is just about a third the size of Scotland, it houses a population three times larger. This makes it one of the most densely populated nations in Africa.

Rwanda's capital Kigali is a busy city, bursting with a culture. For those living outside of the cities in rural areas, farming is their main way to earn a living. Farms often produce coffee, tea, maize and soybeans.

Julien lives in a rural area in Rwanda. She received farming training plus seeds and tools to help her grow food for her family.

Recently, Julien's family had a water tank installed at their home. She and the children used to walk for over an hour to collect fresh water every day, sometimes twice a day.



**“We used to struggle to even buy porridge to eat. Now we have the freedom to eat whatever we want. We grow our own crops and enjoy the fruits of our labour. We can afford whatever we need from the market.” – Julien**