

Such A Loving God...

The Lost Son & Forgiving Father (Lk 15: 11 -32)

Lent - Week 4 Year C Meditation and Ritual For Children

This meditation and ritual is based on the Sunday Gospel for Lent Week 4 Year C. It is intended for classroom use. Some of the language and imagery used here will need to be adapted for little children.

Meditation Theme: God's Unconditional Love

Scripture Focus: Luke 15: 11 – 32
The Lost Son and the Forgiving Father

Sacred Space: A purple candle placed next to the Word of God with purple fabric draped around it.

Song For Meditation: **FROM A LONG WAY HOME** (Monica Brown– Praise & Blessings)

Final Song: **WE ARE CHILDREN OF THE LIVING GOD** (Kathy Sherman – As One Voice For kids)

Duration: 20 - 25 mins

Preparation for the Meditation:

When the children are settled have one of them light the candle in the sacred space. The Prayer Leader then goes to the sacred space and places her/his hand on the Word of God, as she/he says the following: **Today's story is about a father who loved so much, that even when his son turned away from him and did really sad and harmful things, the father waited with open arms for him to come home. Today, as we listen to the Word of God, we ask ourselves, what are the sad and harmful things that we need to turn away from so that we can run into God's open arms and forgiving love?** Several children come forward and dramatize this gospel. Alternatively, the Prayer Leader tells it in story-telling mode. Following the proclamation of the gospel, allow a few minutes for questions and comments. Highlight how the father didn't wait for the son to come to him, but rather, ran to meet his son with open arms, holding and kissing him tenderly. Let the focus of the reflection and discussion be more on the father's unconditional love, than on the son's failure and sin. The Prayer Leader then invites the children to think about what it is in their own lives that they need to turn away from, e.g. selfishness, teasing others, bullying, uncooperative behaviour and how would God meet them in that. Let these questions lead into the meditation.

Meditation:

Having attended to the preparation of this quiet time and meditation (**see introductory notes on Meditation Page**), when the children are settled and still, gradually bring up the quiet reflective music to a suitable level. Invite the children to let the music take them to the place where they most want to be right now, a place where they feel comfortable and relaxed. Give them a few minutes to imagine this place, its colours, sounds, atmosphere... and to visualize themselves there. Invite them to gather before them an image of the younger son from the story....what he looks like, how he might be dressed, what he might be feeling.... Leave them with this for a minute or two and then in a reflective tone, simply say, *“When he was a long way from home...his father run out to meet him...”* (Lk 15: 21). Repeat this a few times in different tones and pace. Then repeat the following slowly and reflectively, *“The father held him in his arms and kissed him tenderly”* (Lk 15:21) Leave them with this for a minute or two, then invite them to consider the following – *“Imagine Jesus holding you like that... imagine when you are lost and sad...Jesus running to meet you..., holding you tenderly...”* Give them a brief minute or so to imagine this. When the time is right, fade down the instrumental music and play the song, ***From A Long Way Home***. When the song is finished, after a brief pause, bring the meditation to closure. (**See notes on Meditation Page**)

Ritual:

After the meditation have the group sit up in a semi-circle near the sacred space. The Prayer Leader invites them to take a minute or so to name for themselves what they are feeling. She/he then invites them to participate in the following litany.

Reader: Loving God, we give you thanks for reaching out to us...

All: We thank you, loving God.

Reader: Loving God, we give you thanks for loving us even when we fail...

All: We thank you, loving God.

Reader: Loving God, we give you thanks for seeking us when we have lost our way...

All: We thank you, loving God.

Reader: Loving God, we give you thanks for waiting for us to turn to you...

All: We thank you, loving God.

Reader: Loving God, we give you thanks for holding us near to you...

All: We thank you, loving God.

Sign of Peace:

When the ritual has ended, the Prayer Leader invites all to stand and offer to one another a sign of peace. She/he highlights the gesture of the forgiving father and encourages all to consciously embody this by saying: **In the spirit of our God, who waits with open arms to embrace us and bless us with peace and love, let us offer to one another a sign of our homecoming.**

Conclude the ritual by offering each other a sign of peace and singing together, ***We Are Children Of The Living God.***

Forgiveness – The Way of Jesus

The Woman Who Sinned (John 8: 1-11)

Lent - Week 5 Year C

Meditation and Ritual For Children

This meditation and ritual is based on the Sunday Gospel for Lent Week 5 Year C. It is intended for classroom use. Some of the language and imagery used here will need to be adapted for little children.

Meditation Theme: Do not judge.

Scripture Focus: John 8: 1- 11
The Woman Who Sinned

Sacred Space: The sacred space is draped in purple fabric with the Word of God placed centrally within it and a lit purple candle beside it. Scattered throughout are small stones and small unlit candles (teelight candles), enough for each person in the group. *(For younger children, replace the candles with a small white flower or something else from the earth that is beautiful, soft and life-giving.)*

Song During the Ritual: RECEIVE THE LIGHT OF CHRIST (Erica Marshall – As One Voice For Kids)

Final Song: GO NOW IN PEACE (Monica Brown – Praise & Blessings)

Duration: 20 –25 mins

Preparation for the Meditation:

When all are settled, have a child light the large purple candle. The Prayer Leader then goes to the sacred space and takes up a stone. Holding it out to the group, she/he says – **In our gospel story today we hear how people use stones to throw in judgement of others and how Jesus teaches us not to condemn and judge other people. As we listen to the story today, let us think about how we can be cruel in the way we treat at others and judge them. Let us ask Jesus to help us to be more understanding and compassionate, as he was, in the way we relate to others.**

The Prayer Leader then takes up the Word of God and sits down with it, holding it close as she/he actually *tells* the story rather than read it, *being sensitive to what is age appropriate for the children*, in terms of the text. When the Gospel has ended, the Prayer Leader invites the group to respond – be prepared for all kind of responses. She/he then directs them to sit quietly and reflect on the story, imagining themselves as part of the crowd, thinking about the people they judge and treat badly. After a few minutes, the Prayer Leader invites them to process to the sacred space and each take a stone, return to their places and prepare for their meditation, keeping the stone

firmly in their hands. *(To avoid any foolishness with the stones, brief the group about them before the session begins, without anticipating the story or symbolism).*

Meditation:

Having attended to the preparation of this quiet time and meditation (**see introductory notes on Meditation Page**), when children are settled and still, gradually bring up the quiet reflective music to a suitable level. Invite the children to imagine the scene of this story from John's Gospel... the setting... the people... the sounds...the energy of the crowd... the woman...how she looks and how she might be feeling...the look on her face as she looks down at the ground... Give them time with this. Direct them to imagine Jesus in this scene...where is he looking... he is looking down at the ground where the woman is looking ... he is with her... Allow them a minute or two with this and then simply ask who is it that they judge and condemn? Direct them to imagine that person(s) standing before them now... Give them a minute or so with this and then simply ask them to imagine what Jesus would say to this person whom they want to judge and condemn... how would Jesus treat them.... Ask them to reflect on *What would Jesus say to the person at whom you want to throw stones ...the person you judge... Imagine ...Listen to what Jesus says, "Neither do I condemn you..."* Repeat this a few times in a slow, tender, deliberate tone. Let the music play on for a minute or two and then gradually fade it out. After a brief pause, bring the meditation to closure. (**See notes on Meditation Page**).

Ritual:

While maintaining the silent, reflective atmosphere, invite the children to sit in a circle around or near the sacred space. Ask them to think about how they feel and to become aware of the stone in their hand as they pray together the following.

Penitential Ritual:

Prayer Leader: As you hold the stone in your hand, think about the way you judge and condemn other people.

Pause for silent reflection

Reader: Lord Jesus, you came not to judge, but to bring healing and forgiveness. Lord have mercy

All: Lord have mercy

Prayer Leader: As you hold the stone in your hand, think about the ways in which you have been hard and cruel to others.

Pause for silent reflection

Reader: Lord Jesus, you call us to be kind and loving to all people. Christ have mercy

All: Christ have mercy

Prayer Leader: As you hold the stone in your hand, think about the way you fail to respect others and accept them for who they are.

Pause for silent reflection

Reader: **Lord Jesus, you teach us to treat others as you would treat them. Lord have mercy**

All: **Lord have mercy**

Following this, the Prayer Leader invites them to come forward one at a time and place their stone on the ground at the foot of the sacred space, then take a small white candle, light it from the large purple candle and return to their places.

(For younger children you will need to modify this ritual- either light the candle for them or use the symbol of white flowers or something beautiful from the earth that is safer for them to handle.)

Throughout this ritual, sing the mantra **Receive The Light of Christ**. *(If the group is large then have the group go up in pairs, but ensure that there are no long queues and that the ritual can be seen by all).* When the ritual is ended, the Prayer Leader invites them to stand and sing together **Go Now In Peace** as they hold their candles high. *(Encourage them to take their candles home and use them for some quiet time during Lent).*

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