

Discovery Time at Home; March 22, 2020

Explain how today is the 4th Sunday in a special season called Lent. Lent is 6 weeks long. It is a time to prepare our hearts for Easter. A long time ago, most people who became Christians were adults. To be baptized meant following Jesus in a way that for many people meant making changes in their lives. Easter was the main time for baptism. Lent was a time to for them to really think about what they needed to change if they were going to be a loving reflection of Jesus. We are honouring this way of marking Lent by learning different ways of praying.

Begin by reading the following passage from the Bible:

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been born blind. His friends asked him, "Teacher, whose sin caused this man to be born blind - his own sin or his parents' sin?"

Jesus answered, "Blindness isn't caused by sin. Just the same, God's power will be shown in him. I have come to do the work of the One who sent me. I am the light of the world."

After Jesus said this, he spat on the ground and made some mud with it. He put the mud on the man's eyes, then told the man, "Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam." The man went to the pool. He washed and came back. He was able to see.

Explain how in this reading we hear three important things.

1. In the past people thought that challenges people have were a sign they had done something wrong. Jesus makes it clear that differing abilities are just a fact of life.
2. Jesus came to teach us how to live God's Way. This is one of the reason's he says he is the "light of the world". When we aren't following God's way it is like we are stumbling around in the night. When there isn't light, we need someone to show us where to go.
3. Jesus helps all of us to see how to live with love and kindness in the world. Jesus is kind to the man by helping him to see. The man is "sent" to tell others about Jesus.

One of the ways we can "see" more clearly is to ask the Holy Spirit to be with us. The Holy Spirit is offers us wisdom and guidance. We often know deep inside when something is a good thing to do or a not so good thing to do. The feeling something is right or not is sometimes called our conscience. Our conscience is sometimes called "the echo of the Holy Spirit in our heart." We learn to listen to the Holy Spirit by praying. Prayer is listening to God as well as talking to God.

Today they are going to do four kinds of prayer.

Two are similar to ones they have done before. Two are likely going to be new to them.

1. The first type of prayer they will learn is keeping a **Prayer Journal**. Writing can be a good way to pray. It helps us to focus our thoughts. Many people find that they don't know what to say at first, but then when they start writing their heart takes over and it flows easily.

Sometimes when you are writing in a prayer journal it is good to divide it up into themes. This is especially good with younger children. The following four headings can be helpful:

1. Praise
2. Sorry
3. Please
4. Thanks

The first two tap into the idea about conscience. Things that feel right are ways we're following God's way of love and kindness in the world. Things we did that don't feel right we should feel sorry about. The third recognizes that we can't do everything on our own. We may need the help of the Holy Spirit. Somethings we pray for are bigger than things we can do on our own, especially things that are happening in the world that we are worried about. The last category reminds us that we have been blessed in many ways. The more we live with thankfulness the more blessings we will notice in our lives.

Younger children, even older one, may need help to get started in each category. Not everyone is verbal. Some children are more visual. They are free to draw rather than write their prayers.

2. Another way to pray is called **Centring Prayer**. It is also called **Prayer of the Heart**. Ask them if they have ever seen their grandparents sitting together in silence, perhaps sitting on a porch, watching the squirrel, enjoying each other's company. Centring Prayer is silent prayer where we enjoy God's company. We do this by focusing on God's love. We focus on our breath. We may also use a simple word to help do this. It could be "love" or "peace". Maybe "Father" or "Jesus". Which word doesn't matter. It is a word to help focus on God's love when they think of something else. It's ok when that happens. We all have lots of thoughts. Our special word helps us think about God's love instead of lunch, or what they are doing later today, or anything else. To begin Centring prayer they should:

- Quiet down. The best posture is upright in a straight-backed chair.
- Close your eyes and relax by breathing slowly.
- Move towards God with you. Think of God who is living in you. Ponder God's love for you.
- To help you stay present to God and God's love, silently say your special word.
- With each breath, say the word to yourself again.
- Whenever you know you are aware of things other than God, use your word to bring you back. Don't stop to think about how you're doing. Let God take care of that. Just focus on giving your loving attention.
- At the end of 2-3 minutes, the leader will say the Prayer of Jesus to close the prayer.

3. A third activity is a creative exercise. It is another way to help our minds and hearts to be quiet. It is colouring a Mandala. The Mandala tradition comes from India where making one is a form of prayer or meditation. The idea is to be very intentional. Choose each colour with thought. Colour slowly and let the activity to be a way to slow down inside. On the next pages are simple mandala designs for children and more complex patterns for older children and even adults.

4. The last prayer practice is called the **Five-Finger Prayer**. It was developed by Pope Francis. In this prayer, each finger represents something to pray for. The thumb is for those closest to us. The index finger for those who teach, instruct and heal us. The middle finger, our tallest, is for our leaders. The ring finger, our weakest, for those who are in need. The pinky is for ourselves.







