**We all make mistakes, but God always forgives us (community)**

**13 September 2020**

***Readings: Ex 14:19-31; Matthew 18:21-35***

***Theme: Forgiveness***

***Memory verse: “Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?” (Mt 18:33)***

![MC900432536[1]]()**Information for the Parent/Teacher:**

Today’s Gospel highlights the importance of forgiveness. Forgiveness may be particularly challenging for adults. Children tend to be much more forgiving than adults. Perhaps we can learn a lot from children in this regard. Adults or teachers can share their own struggles with forgiveness. This lesson reminds us that we all make mistakes, we all sin, but God’s love is such that God always forgives us. As we say in our Church liturgy, “God’s mercy endures forever.”

Jesus tells the parable of the “Unforgiving servant.” The servant owed his master a great debt, and was likely to be punished for this. But he begged his master to have mercy on him. His master, being filled with compassion cancelled all his debts. When the servant encountered someone, who owed him a small debt, he was not as merciful as his master was to him. Jesus’ shows us that while God is always ready to forgive us our sins, we do not always forgive others. This does not mean that we are free to sin because we know that God will forgive us. Sin is its own punishment and God’s mercy exists so that we can change to become good. We all make mistakes, but it is important to fix ourselves and not make those mistakes again.

We will also discuss how the theme of forgiveness ties in with the environment. For centuries, we humans have (un)knowingly caused great harm towards our environment. Because we see ourselves above all other creatures (‘having dominion over all creation’), we have taken from Mother Nature at uncontrollable rates. Pollution of the land, destruction of forests and grasslands and killing of animals to the point of extinction are sins. When we see ourselves as connected to nature as opposed to being dominant over it, our mindset changes. Perhaps people will minimize the killing of animals, cutting of trees and pollution for the sake of making exceeding profits. In many of our cultures, there exists guardian animals which protect and guide us within the spiritual realm. This again reveals the majestic connectedness we have.

So, we can teach the children that it is important not to forget about the environment when we speak of forgiveness. Just like God forgives us, and we in turn must forgive others and live good lives, we must also treat the environment in the best way.

**Lesson Suggestions:**

**Younger Children (3 – 6 years):**

**Lesson Objectives:**

* To teach children about the importance of forgiveness
* To remind children that we all make mistakes, but God always forgives us.
* To create a sense of caring for our environment by realizing we have made mistakes in the way we have treated creation

**![MC900438203[1]]() Attention Grabber:**

Begin by playing a game of “What would you do?” This is where you read students a scenario and ask them to choose between the three choices (ignore, revenge, forgive). Give each student colours or objects or pieces of paper (for example red=revenge, yellow=ignore, green=forgive) for them to make their choice. Here are a few scenarios that you can read to students. After reading, ask them to raise their colour or object to show their choice.

* You just found out that your best friend has been telling everyone your deepest secret. What do you do?
* Everyone in class got invited to a party but you did not get an invitation. What do you do?
* You were playing a board game and lost your temper because you thought someone was cheating. What do you do?
* You are at school and your “Friend” keeps teasing you in front of everyone. While it is upsetting you, they apologize. What do you do?
* You friend breaks your favourite headphones/toy by accident and wants to apologize. What do you do?

***Please feel free to add or change these scenarios to best suit your children***

Explain to them that today’s lesson is forgiveness.

***Or***

 Make the children stand in a line (side by side) while holding hands. Then, give them all different names (some will be cows, birds, insects, humans, plants, trees, and even water…). Then, ask the person at the beginning of the line to squeeze the next persons hand. Tell them that when they feel their hands being squeezed, they must squeeze the hand of the person next to them (creating a ripple like effect) until it reaches the last persons hand (make sure they squeeze fairly gently so no one is badly hurt).

Explain to them that we are all connected as a community (animals, humans, and plants) in the world. The squeezing of hands represents how we harm each other or even destroy creation. So, when we hurt others or the environment, we are also hurting ourselves. This is why we need God’s forgiveness and need to forgive each other. And that is what we will be talking about today

**Discussion:** The discussion will be divided into 2 parts: one around the message of human forgiveness and the other on forgiveness and the environment

This parable is very colourful and thus wonderful for children to listen to.

Here is an example of this text from the International Children’s Bible:

**An Unforgiving Servant**

**21**Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, when my brother sins against me, how many times must I forgive him? Should I forgive him as many as 7 times?”

**22**Jesus answered, “I tell you, you must forgive him more than 7 times. You must forgive him even if he does wrong to you 70 times 7.

**23**“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who decided to collect the money his servants owed him. **24**So the king began to collect his money. One servant owed him several million dollars. **25**But the servant did not have enough money to pay his master, the king. So the master ordered that everything the servant owned should be sold, even the servant’s wife and children. The money would be used to pay the king what the servant owed.

**26**“But the servant fell on his knees and begged, ‘Be patient with me. I will pay you everything I owe.’ **27**The master felt sorry for his servant. So the master told the servant he did not have to pay. He let the servant go free.

**28**“Later, that same servant found another servant who owed him a few dollars. The servant grabbed the other servant around the neck and said, ‘Pay me the money you owe me!’

**29**“The other servant fell on his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me. I will pay you everything I owe.’

**30**“But the first servant refused to be patient. He threw the other servant into prison until he could pay everything he owed. **31**All the other servants saw what happened. They were very sorry. So they went and told their master all that had happened.

**32**“Then the master called his servant in and said, ‘You evil servant! You begged me to forget what you owed. So I told you that you did not have to pay anything. **33**I had mercy on you. You should have had the same mercy on that other servant.’ **34**The master was very angry, and he put the servant in prison to be punished. The servant had to stay in prison until he could pay everything he owed.

**35**“This king did what my heavenly Father will do to you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All: Praise to Christ our saviour**

**Reflection Questions:**

1. How many times did Jesus say we should forgive someone when they sin against us? (*77 times or “seventy times seven”).*
2. Does this mean we just forgive people for a specific number of times*? (No. Jesus was trying to say that we should always try be forgiving towards others).*
3. The king forgave his servant and did not make him pay back the big amount he owed. Then the servant found out that another servant owed him a little money. Did he forgive the servant that owed him a small debt? *No, he tried to choke him and then threw him in prison.*
4. Why was the king angry with the unforgiving servant? *(The king forgave the servant and did not make him pay back a huge debt. The least the servant could have done was to forgive someone else when they owed him just a little money).*
5. What does this tell us about God? *(God is always willing to forgive us, but we must also forgive others because we all make mistakes*)

**About the environment**

**A**sk the children the following questions,

1. “Is it true that we all mistakes?” (*Yes)*
2. *Sometimes we hurt each other, our friends, family. Should we ask for their forgiveness if we hurt them? (yes)*
3. *What about creation/nature? Do you think that sometimes humans also harm or sin against nature, animals, trees, the ocean etc? How so? (Yes. Through air/water/ground pollution, cutting trees, killing animals etc.)*
4. *Do you think that we humans should also ask God and the environment to forgive us for not always looking after it correctly? (Yes)*

Moral of the story: We all make mistakes. We may hurt other people, animals, our environment. We all sin. But God forgives us. It is important to try our best to do good. Even though it is difficult, we must try to forgive other as God forgives us.

**![MC900078795[1]]()Activity:**

Nature Walk: Let the children take a nature walk in the garden. Each of them must find something in nature that relates and connects to them. Each one should briefly present their nature item and tell the class:

* What is it?
* Why did you choose it?
* What does it say about God?

**Singing**

**![MC900078795[1]]()Game:**

Start with a game of ***Simon*** (or even Simone to be more gender inclusive) ***says:*** Give the children different instructions (like touching their nose, turning around, jogging on the spot etc.). The trick is that they must only do the actions if you say Simon says first. For example, “Simon says, touch your head.” But if you do not say Simon says, and they do the action, they are out. For example, if you just say, “touch your head,” and they touch their heads, they are out. The last person/s remaining, win.

Explain to them that this game teaches that sometimes we make mistakes even though we do not mean to. Like the game, we mean to follow God’s instructions like when we say Simon says, but sometimes we do not get it right. This is why God is awesome. God understands us and forgives.

**Craft:**

For both younger and older children: As a way of asking for forgiveness or repairing the earth, the children can grow a pot plant. Get a container, soil and seed/s. The children help to add the soil, some can add water, the seeds etc. When you are complete, place the plant in a special place (where it can receive sunlight and water) and then allow the group to give it a name (see some examples here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mykRRg0NDjQ>)



**(**[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vp4-cJpVe88**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vp4-cJpVe88)**)**





***Or***

Let the children design their own hand print poster. You will need a large sheet of paper (A3 paper or combination of A4 papers), hand paint/acrylic paint and lots of hands. Encourage the children to also add objects of nature in the poster (like leaves, twigs, sand etc.). This gives emphasis to us all being connected. Here are some creative examples of how it could be done:

(a)

(b) 

**Prayer: Canticle Prayer by Saint Francis:**

Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures,

 especially Sir Brother Sun,

 Who is the day through whom You give us light?

 And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,

 Of You Most High, he bears the likeness.

 Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,

 In the heavens you have made them bright, precious, and fair.

 Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,

 And fair and stormy, all weather's moods,

 by which You cherish all that You have made.

 Praised be You my Lord through Sister Water,

 So useful, humble, precious and pure.”

**Amen**

**Older children (7 – 13 years):**

**Lesson objectives:**

* To teach children about the importance of forgiveness
* To remind children that we all make mistakes, but God always forgives us.
* To create a sense of caring for our environment by realizing we have made mistakes in the way we have treated creation

 **![MC900438203[1]]() Attention Grabber/ lesson:**

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* You friend breaks your favourite headphones/toy by accident and wants to apologize. What do you do?

***Please feel free to add or change these scenarios to best suit your children***

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Explain to them that we are all connected as a community (animals, humans, and plants) in the world. The squeezing of hands represents how we harm each other or even destroy creation. So, when we hurt others or the environment, we are also hurting ourselves. This is why we need God’s forgiveness and need to forgive each other. And that is what we will be talking about today.

**Role Play (optional):**

Role play: This story may be fun if it is acted out. If there are enough children, give them different roles, then read the story for them and allow them time to practice for a short play (5min max).

Roles: X1 king

 X1 servant who owed the king

 X1 servant to the servant of the king

 Anywhere between 1-5 people who go and tell the king what the servant has done to his servant.

They can also add crafts and props into the play.

**Bible Study Discussion:**

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5. What does this tell us about God? *(God is always willing to forgive us, but we must also forgive others because we all make mistakes*).

**Application Questions:**

1. Should we always forgive people even if they do really bad things (here we could talk about issues of abuse, rape, violence etc.)? *Forgiving someone does not always mean that you must reconcile with them. In other words, you may find it in your heart to forgive someone who hurt you in an awfully bad way. But this does not mean you have to remain their friend or stay close with them. If forgiving someone puts you more at risk, it may be best to tell someone you trust or report it to the police (in serious cases).*
2. If God always forgives us when we sin, does it mean we are free to sin whenever we want because we know that God forgives us? *No. Sin is its own punishment. God’s mercy is there because while it is true that we all make mistakes, we all must strive to be good, loving people. When we sin on purpose, we are punishing ourselves and separating ourselves from God. God’s mercy always brings us back.*

**About the environment**

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**Game:**

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Explain to them that this game teaches that sometimes we make mistakes even though we do not mean to. Like the game, we mean to follow God’s instructions like when we say Simon says, but sometimes we do not get it right. This is why God is awesome. God understands us and forgives.

**Craft:**

**Create a forgiveness poster:**

Create a large poster with different messages on forgiveness. They can add what they understood from the Gospel, handprints, quotes, their names. The poster will serve as a reminder of the importance of forgiveness. Remind them to also add messages of how forgiveness also includes how we treat creation (they can add leaves, twigs, pebbles, and draw pictures of animals).

**To signify our asking forgiveness from creation,** Create a pot plant. Get a container, soil and seed/s. Allow the children to play a role in the process (some can add the soil, some can add water, the seeds etc.). When planted, place the plant in a special place (where it can receive sunlight and water) and then allow the group to give it a name (see some examples here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mykRRg0NDjQ>)



([**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vp4-cJpVe88**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vp4-cJpVe88)**)**

**![MC900048046[1]]()Prayer: Consider praying the Canticle prayer of Saint Francis:**

 “Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures,

 especially Sir Brother Sun,

 Who is the day through whom You give us light.

 And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,

 Of You Most High, he bears the likeness.

 Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,

 In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.

 Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,

 And fair and stormy, all weather's moods,

 by which You cherish all that You have made.

 Praised be You my Lord through Sister Water,

 So useful, humble, precious and pure.”

**Amen**

**References**

**Cox, J. 2009. ‘Classroom Activities that Teach Forgiveness.’ Available from:** [**https://www.teachhub.com/classroom-activities-teach-forgiveness**](https://www.teachhub.com/classroom-activities-teach-forgiveness) **(Accessed on 10 May 2020).**

**Mission Bible Class. 2020. ‘Parable of an Unforgiving Servant.’ Available from:** [**https://missionbibleclass.org/new-testament/part1/parables-teachings-of-jesus/an-unforgiving-servant/**](https://missionbibleclass.org/new-testament/part1/parables-teachings-of-jesus/an-unforgiving-servant/) **(Accessed on 11 May 2020).**

**‘International Children’s Bible.’ 2020. Available from:** [**https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+18%3A21-35&version=ICB**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+18%3A21-35&version=ICB) **(Accessed on 9 May 2020).**