

Called to be Catholic Children's Resources

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Adoration - "Infinite and Merciful Love"

You will need:

- Heart shapes cut out of coloured paper, one for each child, large enough to write on and decorate - you could use the template on the last sheet
- Pens (and perhaps some glitter pens, stick-on stars, etc.)
- A Bible

Explanation:

'To adore God is to acknowledge him as God, as the Creator and Saviour, the Lord and Master of everything that exists, as infinite and merciful Love... To adore God is to praise and exalt him and to humble oneself, as Mary did in the Magnificat, confessing with gratitude that he has done great things and holy is his name.' CCC §2096-7

How do we help children understand that we 'adore' Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? Throughout scripture God tells his children how much he loves them; we are invited to express our love in return.

Guiding the exercise - preparation:

God's mercy and love go together - the Psalms refer to God's 'loving kindness' when they speak of his mercy. Talk about how we know God loves us: through what he tells us in the Bible, through the good things he gives us, through the love of other people; above all because Jesus came to show us (cf John 3:16, 'God so loved the world...')

Ask them what their favourite stories about Jesus are - stories that help them love and trust Jesus. You might need to help them with some suggestions. Find the stories they choose in the Gospel and read them, if time. What do we learn about Jesus? What do they want to say to him in return: thank you, I love you, I trust you..?

Explain that these are the things we say to Jesus when we spend time with him in the Blessed Sacrament: that's what 'Adoration' means.

Give out the paper hearts and pens. Tell them that they are going to write their own short prayers of adoration: 'Jesus, I love you because...' Invite them to think of some examples and say them out loud (perhaps you could write them on a board or flip chart), then give them some time to think quietly of their own prayers. When they are ready they can write their prayer on the heart - perhaps decorating it with the glitter pens, stars, etc.



Before the Sacrament:

During the time of Adoration, the children can read out their prayers in turn, leaving a long pause after each one (the leader could gently touch each child on the shoulder when it is his or her turn to read). If it is felt appropriate, the children could lay their paper hearts in front of the Sacrament once they have read, to show that Jesus receives and hears our prayers.

The prayers could be interspersed with verses from scripture which tell of God's love for us (read by children or their leaders): thus the prayer becomes a dialogue. Some examples:

Isaiah 43:4 'You are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you.'

Isaiah 54:10 'The mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you.'

Hosea 11:1,4 'When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son... I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love.'

Luke 6:36 'Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.'

Luke 12:6-7 'Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.'

Matthew 28:20 'Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

John 6:35 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'

John 10:14 'I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.'

John 15:9 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.'

John 15:15 'I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.'



"I want to tell you one thing: When the Apostle John, who was such a good friend of Jesus, wanted to say who God is, do you know what he said? 'God is love.'"

Pope Francis, to a group of Italian schoolchildren

Template for the paper hearts



The Lost Coin

You will need:

A Bible marked at Luke 15:8-10

One for each groups of 3 to 4 children:

Clean, empty jars (with not too narrow an opening)

Paper tissues

String or rubber bands

Coins

Water*



One for each child:

Cocktail sticks

Copies of pages 3 and 4 of this activity section

Crayons etc. if they are to do the colouring in the group

Optional:

Chocolate coins, at least one for each child

*This may get messy, so make sure tables are covered if necessary and books etc. put away before starting this part of the exercise!

Beforehand:

Fill each jar half to two-thirds full of water and cover it with a tissue, fastening it with string or a rubber band so that the cover is taut.

Guiding the exercise:

Read Jesus' parable of the lost coin: this is a story about God searching for us when we are lost, because he loves us. Ask: have they ever been lost? What did that feel like? What was it like to be found again? The coin couldn't rescue itself, it had to wait to be found.

Get them into groups of three or four and give each group a jar and each child a cocktail stick. Go round placing a coin on top of the cover of each jar. Explain that when you say 'Go' they are to take it in turns to make a hole in the tissue cover without causing the coin to fall in (of course it will eventually!). When the coin does drop in, the child who made the last hole must try to get it out of the jar (this is the messy bit) and, when they succeed, to bring it up to the front. Start them off...

Talk about the exercise: sometimes God must have a hard job finding us!

If whoever provided the coins is willing, the children could place them in a box for Missio, or CAFOD, or a local charity you support: explain that mercy must be paid forwards, by being merciful and helping others. If there is to be a Mass, the coins could be brought up with the offertory.

The exercise could be followed by a

Chocolate coin hunt

Beforehand, secrete chocolate coins around whatever space you have to use. If it's evening, or you have some dark and gloomy corners available you could ask the children to bring torches (like the woman's lamp in the story).

Get the children to bring the coins to a central place to gather the together. When all have been found, share them out and enjoy - like the angels rejoicing in heaven!

Afterwards settle them down to work with the activity sheets, or give them the sheets to take home.





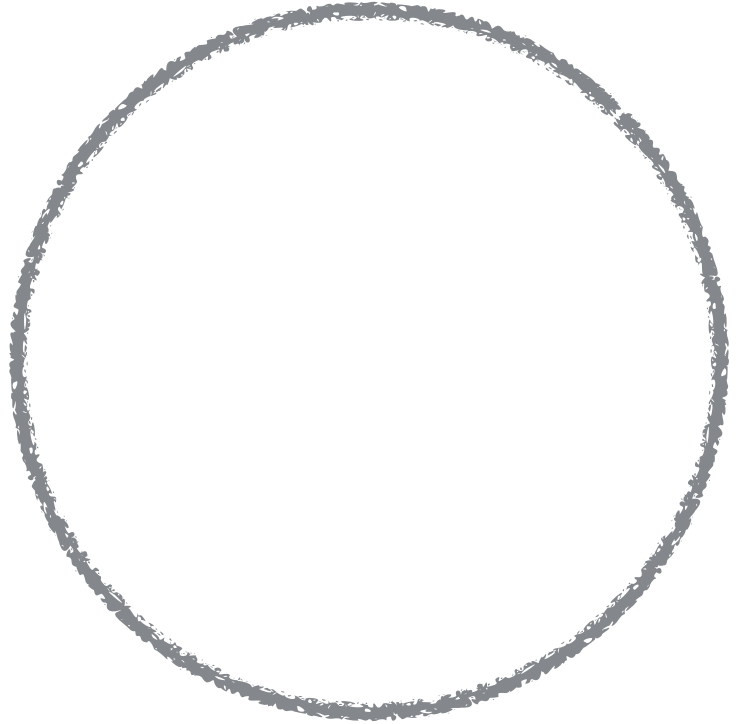
Luke 15:8-10



Our coins have a picture of the Queen on them: DG stands for 'Dei Gratia' - 'by the grace of God.' We all need God's grace and mercy each day!

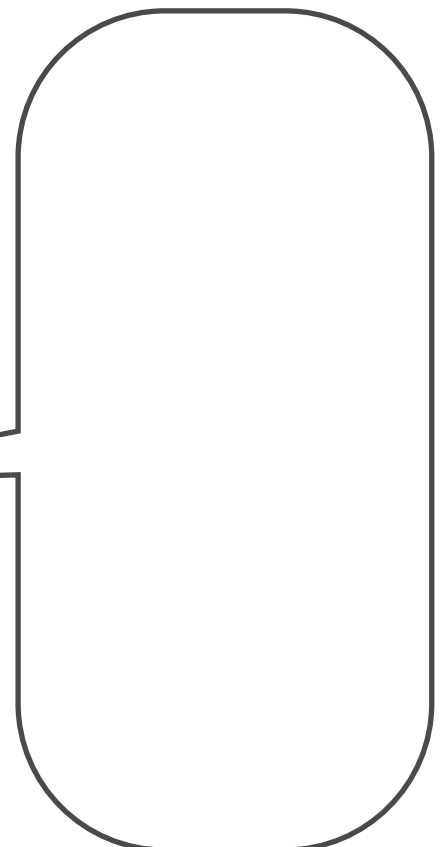
Do you know what Fid. Def. stands for? Would anyone write that about you?

Decorate your own coin, with a picture of you and your name written round it...



What does God say about finding you?

"Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost."



The Prodigal Son - Activities

You will need:

- A Bible marked at Luke 15:11-32
- Pens, crayons, paper for each child
- Copies of pages 2 and 3 of this activity section (for them to work with or take home)
- Plenty of space for acting

Explanation:

This parable is a beautiful description of God's love and patience, and his desire for all the lost to return to him. It also reminds us that, like the two sons, we are all sinners: both those who go off the rails and lead a wild life, and those who keep all the rules while having thoughts of resentment, envy and self-righteousness. We all need God's mercy; and nothing we do can stop God loving us. It is important to emphasise these points when leading the exercise with the children: get them to think and talk about it.

Guiding the exercise:

First, read the story. It would be good to keep the open Bible somewhere visible throughout, as a reminder that this is a story from the Gospel in the words of Jesus.

Choose three children to act out the story, playing the parts of the father and the two sons. Re-tell it in your own words, pausing to let the children act out each bit of the story (depending on their ability and confidence they can either mime or improvise dialogue). Expect laughter - this is good! At certain points, stop the action and ask the audience what they think each character is thinking and feeling at this stage, e.g.:

- The younger son asking for his inheritance
- Leaving home and partying
- Feeding the pigs and being hungry
- The father watching and waiting for him
- The younger son coming home
- The older son realising what has happened



Afterwards, when they have quietened down, ask them to consider the following questions **for each son**:

- How did this brother make his father sad?
- How did the father respond to him?
- What do you think this son will do next?

Be sure to draw out the points from the explanation above. If there is time, you could ask them to draw a picture or write a story about what happened next, e.g. did the older brother join the party? Or, in small groups, to act it out.

Prodigal Son Word Search

Find the words from the story in the grid below - they run in all directions. We've done one to start you off...

T	N	A	T	S	I	D	Y	Q	H	M	N	S	D	F
B	P	N	Y	N	H	O	C	U	N	O	F	E	T	R
F	J	R	O	R	U	A	N	I	I	E	S	R	S	I
F	U	S	O	N	T	G	R	S	S	S	V	V	O	N
O	T	P	G	P	R	N	S	E	I	U	J	A	L	G
R	O	E	K	Y	E	A	U	K	N	F	M	N	E	O
A	R	N	X	D	P	R	E	O	H	A	K	T	S	H
F	E	T	F	M	A	Y	T	G	C	M	D	S	L	D
S	B	R	O	T	H	E	R	Y	H	I	G	Z	A	N
D	K	C	L	A	F	S	D	E	N	N	I	S	D	U
C	E	L	E	B	R	A	T	E	I	E	H	E	N	O
R	O	B	E	B	E	Q	T	C	Q	I	C	S	A	F
O	L	D	E	R	F	S	N	H	R	R	G	J	S	Q
V	H	R	A	N	G	A	T	E	E	I	B	M	Y	Q
E	V	I	L	A	D	D	D	C	P	R	F	L	A	C

ALIVE
 BEST
 BROTHER
 CALF
 CELEBRATE
 COMPASSION
 COUNTRY
 DANCING
 DEAD
 DISTANT
 FAMINE
 FAR OFF

FATHER
 FOUND
 HEAVEN
 HIRED
 HUNGRY
 KISSED
 LOST
 MUSIC
 OLDER
 PIGS
 PROPERTY
 RAN

RING
 ROBE
 SANDALS
 SERVANTS
 SHARE
 SINNED
 SON
 SPENT
 YOUNGER



Colour the picture... write in what you think they are saying



Stilling Exercises

If children are going to come into church for a time of Adoration, or if you want to follow a time of activity with a time of quiet prayer in their group, it will be good to have practised being quiet and still, and these are three suggestions for providing a 'gear change' - which can be useful for us all.

While not all of them are 'prayers' as such, these simple stilling exercises can become a prelude to prayer. There are scripture references for each one which can be read and explored with the children, if there is time.

1. Listening

No special materials required for this one

Explanation:

We need to be quiet to listen. (You could show them that LISTEN is an anagram of SILENT.) It's hard to listen to someone talking to us when there is noisy traffic or loud music getting in the way. We might miss something important! Ask them:

- What do you enjoy listening to?
- What would it be like if you couldn't hear?
- Do you have any friends or family who are deaf? How is life different for them?

Scripture references:

1 Samuel 3:1-19 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God.'

Matthew 17:1-8 'This is my Son, the Beloved... listen to him!'

Guiding the exercise:

'Make sure you are sitting comfortably, and be as quiet as you can.' [It might take a few moments for fidgeting, giggling, etc. to quieten down.] 'Eyes closed... In a moment I am going to ask you to put your hands over your ears and silently count to 20 very slowly. Then uncover your ears (keep your eyes closed) and just listen to whatever sounds you can hear. Stay as quiet and still as you can. I will tell you when the time is up.' [5 to 10 minutes - can be adapted according to the age of the group.]

Afterwards, ask them:

- What sounds did you hear?
- What was the loudest? The softest?
- The nearest? The furthest away?

Remind them that we will be as quiet as this during the time of Adoration.



2. Breathing

You will need:

It is possible to guide a simple exercise in breathing awareness without any special materials, but if you want to try the 'Feather' variation you will (obviously!) need a feather for each child. Peacock feathers work best: they can be bought on Amazon or from craft shops or some florists. The children can take the feathers home afterwards, with an invitation to practise the exercise on their own.

Explanation:

Paying attention to our breathing has been used as part of prayer for centuries in the Christian tradition (from the Eastern practice of the Jesus Prayer to the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola) as well as in other religions. We each breathe up to 30,000 times a day - without thinking much about it, unless we have a health problem, but every breath is a gift from God. We could last for a while without food or water - but not without air! When we are frightened or upset we take lots of little, shallow breaths; breathing slowly and deeply can help us feel calmer. Have they watched a cat or dog breathing when it is asleep or very relaxed? The breath seems to come from deep in its tummy.

Scripture references:

Genesis 2:7-9 'The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.'

Ezekiel 37:1-10 'The breath came into them, and they lived.'

John 20:19-23 'He breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.'

Guiding the exercise:

'Put your hand on your tummy, just above your navel' [Demonstrate! And then it might be helpful to get them to close their eyes to avoid distractions.] 'Breathe... see if you can make your hand move. Breathe in... and out... in... and out...' [Allow time for a rhythm to develop]

'Now silently say the name of Jesus to yourself as you breathe. Je... sus... Je... sus...' [Afterwards you can tell them that this is a very old way of praying. They can use it to pray to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.]

Optional part two - with feathers:

1. Give each child a feather of their own to hold.
2. Hold the feather in front of your face and breathe out completely (no need to blow hard!), seeing how long you can make the feather 'dance'. Watch the feather move with your out-breath.
3. Breathe in slowly to the count of four.
4. Hold your breath and count to two.
5. Now breathe out and see how long you can push the air out of your lungs: how long can you make the feather move?
6. Repeat several times.

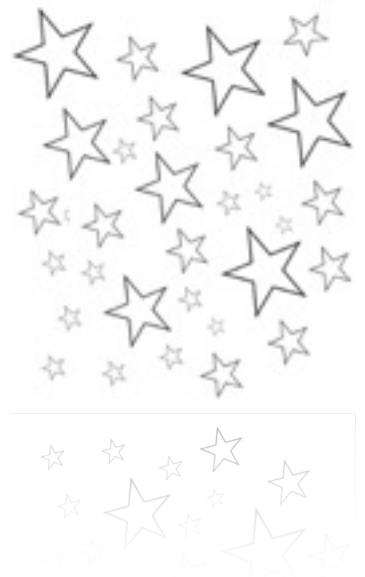


3. 'Peace, Be Still'

A visual aid which children can help to make (messy but fun!). This exercise can be used as a prelude to either of the others.

You will need:

- A large jar which can be closed securely - a Kilner jar is good - or a bottle (in which case a funnel will be useful).
- Water, hot and cold
- Coloured glitter glue
- Ordinary glitter, in different colours if possible
- Optional: chunky glitter, and/or foil 'confetti' in different colours, shapes and sizes
- A tablespoon or similar to stir with
- A Bible



Making the glitter jar:

Place about a cupful of hot water into the jar. Add about two tablespoons of glitter glue and stir thoroughly to mix them together. Then add some glitter until there's a layer of half to three quarters of an inch in the jar. Top up the jar with cold water, leaving about an inch at the top for shaking room. Finally add the chunky glitter and/or foil confetti, if using. Close the jar tightly - and give it a good shake.

Explanation:

Sometimes our minds are full of different thoughts and feelings swirling around. Can they think of some examples? E.g. 'what's for tea?', 'I'm looking forward to that party', 'I'm worried about school tomorrow', 'I'm upset about what my friend said to me'. We can talk to God about all these things, of course, but sometimes our swirling thoughts make it hard to be still and remember that God is with us and listening to us. Remind them of the story of storm on the lake: what would the disciples have been feeling when Jesus was asleep in the boat and they thought they were going to sink?

Demonstrate by shaking the jar and holding your hand behind it. How long before the glitter settles and they can see clearly through the water? (Try this first, in case the glue has made the water too opaque - which would defeat the object!) We often need to take some time to become still so that we can pray, especially if we've been busy just before our prayer time.

Guiding the exercise:

Get them to sit comfortably and place the jar where everyone can see it clearly. Read the story of the storm on the lake (Mark 4:35-41).

'Take a few slow deep breaths... I'm going to shake the jar... just quietly watch the glitter swirl and land until the water is clear again... Imagine that all the thoughts in your head are doing the same thing.'

Give the jar a good shake, put it down and sit with them to watch. Once the water is clear, leave a few moments of silence before ending the exercise. 'What was that like?' Remind them that if they feel fidgety or distracted while they are praying they can close their eyes and remember the glitter in the jar, swirling and slowly coming to rest.



Scripture references:

Psalm 46(45):10 'Be still, and know that I am God'

Isaiah 30:15 'In quietness and in trust shall be your strength'

Matthew 6:25 'Do not worry'

From the Catechism (for leaders to consider):

The need to involve the senses in interior prayer corresponds to a requirement of our human nature. We are body and spirit... we must pray with our whole being.

CCC §2702

Contemplative prayer is **silence**, the 'symbol of the world to come' or 'silent love'... in this silence the Spirit of adoption enables us to share in the prayer of Jesus.

CCC §2717



'...sharing in the prayer of Jesus'

Teaspoons

Note:

It might seem more appropriate to focus on 'sorry' as we are considering mercy, but this exercise reminds us that, in the tradition of the 'Examen' prayer, any examination of conscience must begin with gratitude. We start by remembering God's constant loving kindness, shown in the many gifts he gives us each day. And this gives us the confidence to ask for the grace we need and to trust God for it, though we know we are powerless to help ourselves. So this exercise shows us 'sorry' happily sandwiched between 'thank you' and 'please'.



You will need:

- A teaspoon for each child (it would be good if they were able to keep them afterwards - plastic disposable ones would do)
- Cardboard luggage labels or gifts tags (the tie-on kind) - three for each child
- Pens, pencils, etc.

Explanation:

A useful way of remembering three points of prayer - thank you, sorry, and please. Prayer doesn't have to be lengthy and contain lots of words: many short 'arrow' prayers throughout the day can feed our friendship with God, and help us remember that we rely on our loving God for all we need. St Paul said 'pray without ceasing' (1 Thessalonians 5:17), and this is a way towards doing just that.

Guiding the exercise:

Give them each a teaspoon. 'A teaspoon doesn't hold very much, but what it does hold can make a big difference. Imagine a teaspoon full of sugar on your chips, or a teaspoon of salt in a cup of hot chocolate! Teaspoons are also used to measure out medicine, so that we receive exactly the amount we need to make us better.

In recipes, 'teaspoon' is written as TSP, and these letters can help us remember three things we say when we pray: thank you, sorry and please. So, what kind of things can we say...

- **Thank you**
 - **Sorry**
 - **Please for?'**
-
- first, to other people... [ask them for examples of each. You could write them on the flip chart or board if there is one]
 - ... and then to God [more examples]

If we practise saying thank you, sorry and please to God every day we will find it becomes a habit. Each time something happens we can decide - is this is a thank you, sorry or please moment? And we will find ourselves offering 'teaspoonfuls' of prayer throughout the day, talking to God just as friends are always talking to each other.'

Give them three labels or tags each. Ask them to think quietly for a few moments, then write a 'thank you', 'sorry' and 'please' prayer, one on each, and tie them to their spoons.

Note:

You could also look at the Lord's Prayer together (perhaps with older children) and decide where 'thank you', 'sorry' and 'please' come in it. It might be harder to find the 'thank you', though gratitude is implicit in the opening address to God. As the Catechism says:

'We give him thanks for having revealed his name to us, for the gift of believing in it, and for the indwelling of his Presence in us.' CCC §2781