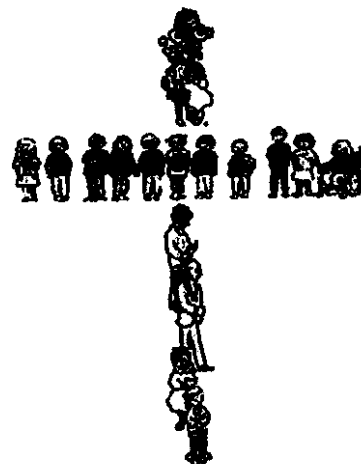




What is the Church?



Parent Leader's Guide: Unit 5

We are People who Follow Jesus

Main themes

- ♦ As members of the Church community we follow Jesus' way of love.
- ♦ Our gifts of bread and wine, symbols of human life and work, are accompanied by offerings to support the Church community and those in need.
- ♦ In this season of Lent, we consider what it means to give as Jesus gave.

Link to the Mass - The Presentation of Gifts

"Between the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the eucharist we have some rather quiet, practical moments. The collection is taken and the gifts and table are prepared. Bread and wine are brought by the faithful, but so are gifts of money. In this way we place what we have earned by our work within the holy time of Mass. Unwilling to separate our lives from our prayer, we bring something for the poor and the church from our wealth or our poverty."

(Cardinal Bernardin, *Guide to the Assembly*, page 15)

During the meeting, parents will:

- ♦ discover what the parish catechists or faith friends will do with the children
- ♦ be given an outline of the celebration for this unit and be clear about their own role
- ♦ consider suggestions for supporting their child at home
- ♦ appreciate the importance of giving for Christian living
- ♦ understand the relationship between the presentation of the gifts and the collection
- ♦ reflect on opportunities for self denial and involvement in issues of justice and peace, especially during the season of Lent
- ♦ be invited to pray together

Unit 5 – Approach A

Before the meeting begins: have the following clearly displayed -

a cross

bread

wine

offertory baskets and/or planned giving envelopes

a CAFOD envelope

You will also need: copies of the parent leaflets for those attending

1. Warmly welcome everyone and introduce the focus for this next step on the children's journey.

- ♦ as Christians we are called to follow Jesus, we are called to love; to give, to share, to put other people first. Jesus' way of love led him to give his life for us on the cross and we too are called to respond to God's love for us by giving to others
- ♦ this can be done in many different ways: our time, money, skills, prayer, a smile
- ♦ giving of ourselves can be challenging, but the Holy Spirit helps us, enabling us to follow Jesus in this way and to represent Jesus Christ alive in the church today.

Give out the parent leaflets and invite the parents to look first at the quotation on the back page.

2. Invite everyone to reflect for a moment on this stage in the Mass:

- ♦ these "practical moments" can often be quite busy: sometimes a hymn will be sung or perhaps some music played: there will be shuffling and movement as people gather money and envelopes together; if children have been celebrating the Liturgy of the Word in a separate place, they will often be returning at this point
- ♦ all this serves to mark the change of focus from God's presence with us in the Word to God's presence through the gifts of bread and wine. Just as at the beginning of Mass we recognised that we come as we are, with all the distractions, worries, concerns of the past week, as well as the blessings and joys, so too now we bring the bread and wine as signs of our lives and work
- ♦ we offer the past week - the good, the bad, the easy, the difficult; we give in the collection "for the poor and the church"
- ♦ in our offertory procession, on behalf of the whole community, we bring "fruits of the earth and work of human hands"
- ♦ the bread is unleavened, "a simple bread, a bread of the poor"; we acknowledge the ways in which we are poor, needy, hungry
- ♦ we bring our gifts recognising that we too need gifts, we need to be fed, we need "the bread of life"

3. Invite the parents to spend a few moments discussing with one another the following:

We can give in many different ways: our time, money, skills, prayer

Which do you find easiest to give and in what circumstances?

Which do you find most difficult?

After sharing one or two points from the discussions continue with some or all of the following:

- ♦ the season of Lent is a time for special reflection on God's love for us through the symbol of the cross. In preparation for renewing our baptismal promises at Easter we explore our response to God's love for us
- ♦ an important way of doing this is by looking at the ways in which we give of ourselves; our time, our money, the skills and talents we have; we look to deny ourselves some of the things or attitudes which prevent us giving as God gives
- ♦ we also reflect anew on our responsibility as members of the Church to help others, both at parish level and world wide [here mention can be made of charities such as SVP and CAFOD]

Invite everyone to turn again to the parent leaflet and point out the work the children will be doing with their catechist as a summary of the points already made.

Ask them to discuss for a few moments the suggestions on the third page of the leaflet. Allow any issues or questions to follow this.

4. Details of the celebration for "We are People who Follow Jesus" should now be given.
5. Introduce a short period of prayer by making the sign of the cross.

Lord Jesus Christ,

you called your disciples to go forward with you on the way to the cross.

Since you first walked that road, countless millions have followed you.

Help us to follow you and to give of ourselves especially during this Lenten season.

Help us to accompany our children as they prepare to celebrate the gift of your Holy Spirit and to receive you in the Eucharist for the first time. Amen.

Unit 5 – Approach B

Before the meeting begins: have the following clearly displayed -
bread and wine
offertory baskets and/or envelopes
picture(s) of ordinary people who could represent ourselves

You will also need:
the room arranged for group work: 5/6 chairs round a table
copies of the worksheets headed “To give or give up?”
copies of the parent leaflet for those present

1. As parents arrive for the meeting, warmly welcome them, inviting them to sit grouped around the tables. Introduce yourself and any other team members present then focus for this next step on the children’s journey.

In this unit we are being invited to think about the way in which we offer ourselves during the offertory procession.

As Christians we are called to follow Jesus, we are called to love; to give, to share, to put other people first. Jesus’ way of love led him to give his life for us on the cross and we too are called to respond to God’s love for us by giving to others.

In our first meeting together we considered how the Church is made up of people, and that we are the Church. What we give, not only in terms of money, is part of the whole Church’s giving.

2. Hand out copies of the worksheets headed **“To give or give up?”**.

Depending on your situation, perhaps read through the sheet first, then invite parents to reflect on their own for about five minutes.

Invite them to share as much or as little with the others grouped around their table, recognising that this may be very personal.

Once you feel they are ready, invite them to turn over to the other side of the sheet and as a group discuss the way in which the Church gives during the year.

After about ten minutes invite any feedback and offer some of the following points:

- ♦ the Offertory, as we commonly call it marks a change of focus from God’s presence with us in the Word to God’s presence through the gifts of bread and wine
- ♦ just as at the beginning of Mass we recognised that we come as we are, with all the distractions, worries, concerns of the past week, as well as the blessings and joys, so too now we bring the bread and wine as signs of our lives and work

- ♦ during the offertory, in addition to the gifts of bread and wine, we offer money to reach out in support of others, to maintain the Church and parish schools
 - ♦ it is a time for us to reflect on our offerings during the past week in terms of our giving to others in the everyday circumstances of our lives
 - ♦ we can also during this time, look forward to ways in which we will try to give more of ourselves in the coming week
3. Give out the parent leaflet and point out the work the children will be doing with their catechist as a summary of the points already made.
- Ask them to discuss for a few moments the suggestions on the third page of the leaflet. Allow any issues or questions to follow this.
4. Details of the celebration for "We are People who Follow Jesus" should now be given.
5. Invite all present to join in a short period of prayer by making the sign of the cross.

Read the following story from the Gospel according to Luke:

"Jesus looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on." [21:1-4]

Allow a period of silent reflection then pray:

Compassionate God,
 you bless us with the abundance of your love
 and grace us with the gift of your eternal presence.
 In this Lenten time give us the wisdom to recognise our poverty and the
 compassion to share it's treasure with our brothers and sisters.
 We ask this through your Son Jesus Christ, who gave his life for us.

(From *Prayer for Parish Groups*, The Columba Press)

TO GIVE OR GIVE UP?

Take time to reflect on ways in which you have given this week.

The following may be helpful:

- ♦ Time for my children
- ♦ Time for a neighbour or a colleague at work
- ♦ Time to be with wife/husband/partner
- ♦ Helping someone out
- ♦ Smiling at a stranger
- ♦ Listening to someone
- ♦ Meeting a request to do something
- ♦ Giving a donation to charity
- ♦ Supporting a cause
- ♦ Others?

TO GIVE OR GIVE UP?

What do you think your Church/Parish gives during the week and through the year?

The following may be helpful:

- ♦ Visiting the housebound
- ♦ Visiting the sick in hospital
- ♦ Helping those in need
- ♦ Supporting CAFOD and other charities
- ♦ Financial support for the school
- ♦ Links with the school
- ♦ Rescue Society support
- ♦ Taking Holy Communion to the sick & housebound
- ♦ Offering food & drink to the homeless

Lenten Promise

During this season of Lent reflect on whether to give, or to give up.

Make a Lenten promise for yourself.

Ask your child(ren) to make a Lenten promise.

Unit 5 – Approach C

Before the meeting begins: have the following clearly displayed -

*a cross
bread
wine
offertory baskets and/or planned giving envelopes
a CAFOD envelope*

*You will also need: copies of the parents' leaflets for those attending
copies of the Diocesan Covenant extract on stewardship
a flip chart / or large pieces of paper
markers or poster pens*

1. Warmly welcome everyone and introduce the focus for this next step on the children's journey. Remind them that the last time we met we were reflecting on the importance of the Word of God for the Church. To help us focus for this new unit we are going to use a passage from the Acts of the Apostles which tells us stories of the early Church. Invite everyone to listen to the passage and to listen for just one thing which strikes them (perhaps a word or phrase).

"Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands and houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet and it was distributed to each as any had need."

[Acts 4: 32 - 36, NRSV]

Invite people to share with one other person what struck them as they listened to this reading, then after a few moments write up the responses on the flip chart (or large sheet of paper).

Using the images/ words/ phrases collected from the group, draw the points together with some of the following:

- ♦ the early followers of Jesus recognised that everything they had was a gift and to be shared with the whole community for 'the common good'
- ♦ this 'giving' was an essential part of their response to God's love for them and of their following in Jesus' way
- ♦ they knew that Jesus was concerned to give of himself so that the needs of the poor, the sick, the outcast could be met
- ♦ after the fourth century, there are references to aid or charity centres throughout Rome. These were run by deacons from the contributions made at the Sunday Eucharist, to meet the needs of those who previously would have been helped by the state: the unemployed, the sick, widows and orphans
- ♦ when we gather together on Sunday as God's People we too follow the ancient traditions of the Church, we give of ourselves

2. Give out the parent leaflets and invite the parents to look first at the quotation on the back page. Invite everyone to reflect for a moment on this stage in the Mass:

- ♦ these “practical moments” can often be quite busy: sometimes a hymn will be sung or perhaps some music played; there will be shuffling and movement as people gather money and envelopes together; if children have been celebrating the Liturgy of the Word in a separate place, they will often be returning at this point
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3. Lent is the Church’s season of prayer, fasting and self-denial. It can be a good time to focus on one aspect of our Diocesan Covenant with the Poor. (Here it may be necessary to give more information on this, depending on your parish’s response).

Invite parents to form groups of 4/5 and give out copies of the extract from the Diocesan Covenant. (This is included for photocopying at the end of this approach).

Allow about ten minutes for the tasks printed on the bottom of the sheets, then ask for feedback from the groups.

Invite everyone to turn again to the parent leaflet and point out the work the children will be doing with their catechist as a summary of the points already made.

4. Details of the celebration for “We are People who Follow Jesus” should now be given.

5. Introduce a short period of prayer by making the sign of the cross.

Invite someone from the group to read aloud the Covenant commitment to responsible stewardship.

After a time for silent reflection invite all to join in praying “Our Father ..”

"Called To Be Responsible Stewards of the earth and its resources, we commit ourselves

- ◆ to live simply, sharing what we have and avoiding unnecessary consumption and waste
- ◆ to take seriously the universal need to care for the environment, since our failure to do so diminishes the quality of life for all and especially those on the margins of society
- ◆ to use our money to enrich rather than further impoverish the poor of the world, to invest ethically, to support fair trade and encourage credit unions."

(i) Share what most strikes you about this commitment.

(ii) What practical steps could we take, during this Lenten season, to help our children value this commitment?

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