

St. Joseph's *Children's Liturgy of the Word*

October 2023 (Year A)



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St. Joseph is the patron saint of the family, and the family is the “domestic Church.” These sheets were developed to support my parish of St. Joseph in Great Malvern, Worcestershire, but they are now used by parishes and schools not just in the UK, but some are sent to contacts abroad as well.

As always, feedback and suggestions are most welcome.

Sunday Mass is the cornerstone of our week; These resources are designed to be used in a family setting or in Children's Liturgy of the Word at Mass, or in the classroom. Please make them your own and feel free to pass them on for free.

Our response to Jesus' invitation.

The gospels this month seem to focus on our responses to the invitation we receive from Our Lord Jesus Christ. It's important to help the children realise that the grace of the Holy Spirit given to us first of all in Baptism and then in the other sacraments enables us to respond to Jesus. So, we must always remind them to ask the Holy Spirit for help! Some of the concepts these gospels deal with are quite deep and many years ago I suddenly understood that the grace of the Holy Spirit is like water overflowing in us. The more we are open to His Love (after all, the Holy Spirit IS the love that flows between the Father and the Son), the more we can love God in return. I often demonstrate this in catechesis with the aid of water and jugs and have included this as the final activity for the end of the month. Finally, Advent is approaching and if anyone wants to share any advent ideas, please let me know in good time.

There are Four Dimensions of our Faith, and the activities all reflect one or more of each of these dimensions.

Professing the faith (speaking about it and learning the faith)

Celebrating our faith in the liturgy and the sacraments

C17 Tabernacle, Basilica of St. Ambrose © Carol Ann Harnett



Living the faith in Christ (making choices by the grace of Jesus Christ)

A prayer-filled life where the Our Father takes centre stage



The mystery of the Holy Trinity; that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit is at the heart of our faith. The Father sent His Son to call us to spend Eternal Life with Him in heaven. Only by the grace of the Holy Spirit we can respond to that call. What a privilege!

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Gospel for 26th Sunday Year A

1st October 2023

Matthew 21:28-32

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people, 'What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, "My boy, you go and work in the vineyard today." He answered, "I will not go," but afterwards thought better of it and went. The man then went and said the same thing to the second who answered, "Certainly, sir," but did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?' 'The first' they said. Jesus said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you, a pattern of true righteousness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him.'

The Gospel of the Lord
R/: *Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ*

Children's liturgy of the word for this week

Discussion on the Gospel



- ✠ Light a candle
- ✠ Make the Sign of the Cross
- ✠ Someone read the Gospel slowly

As a parent this scenario is vividly real. How many times do we ask children to do something, they say they will but won't. But it is the same for us – how often do we promise God that we will do such and such, e.g. pray more, be more generous/forgiving, and then forget. Jesus here is showing that it's not what we say but what we do that is important. In the first reading from Ezekiel, the teaching is very clear – we can make changes to our lives!

Q: Jesus is talking to the religious leaders, those who were supposed to be setting an example to others. He told a parable about a man with two sons. What did the man ask the sons to do? (A: Work in the vineyard (where vines for wine grow.)

Q: What did the first son say when he was asked? (A: "I will not go".)

Q: Can you think of a time when your parents or teachers asked you to do something, and you said no at first – or moaned about it? (A: Open.)

Q: What did the second son say to his father when he was asked to go and help? (A: "Certainly sir" [which means yes].)

Q: Which of the sons actually went to help in the vineyard in the end? (A: The first one.)

Q: Jesus is saying that it's not what we say we will do, but what we actually do that is important. What are the things that Jesus asks us to do these days. (Open, but if the children only offer things such as "be kind, Be helpful" etc, direct them to the life of prayer – may be suggest that He also asks them to pray more, to pay attention in Mass etc.)

Q: This parable shows us that we can change our minds, so even if we at first decide to do something that is bad or naughty, we can make a change. What bad or naughty things can we ask Jesus to help us stop doing? (Open.)

Q: Who helps us to make these changes? (The Holy Spirit.)

There are two activities on the next pages – older children may like to write a prayer to the Holy Spirit asking Him to help them to do what Jesus asks and younger children can colour in themselves doing what Jesus asks.

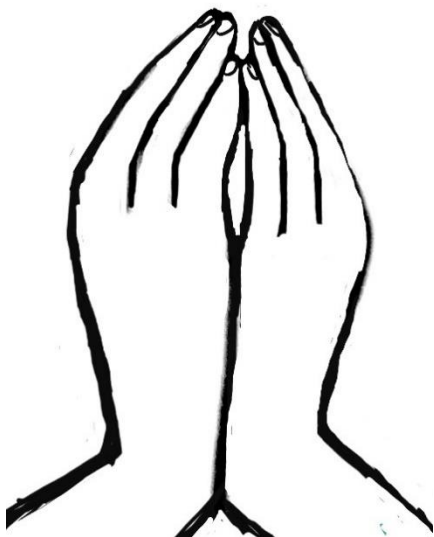


A prayer to the Holy Spirit
asking for help to do what
Jesus asks us to do.





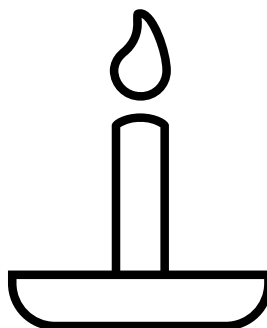
Holy Spirit, please help me to do these things Jesus is asking me to do:



Pray more often.



Do as I'm told
when I am asked
to wash or get
dressed



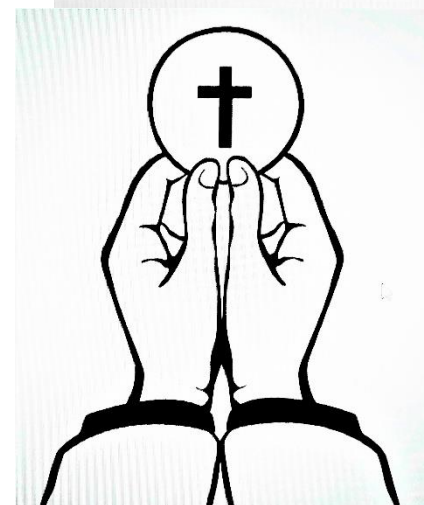
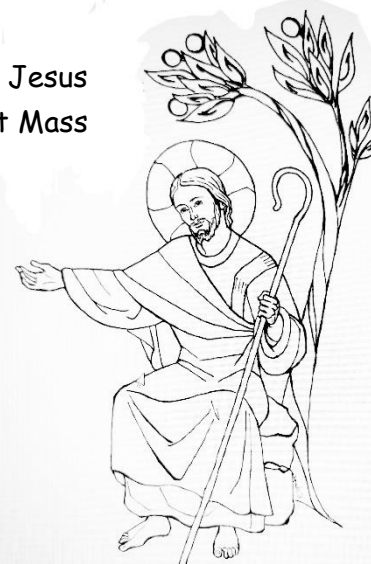
Light a candle and
say a prayer for
someone who is ill



Help at home

Pay attention during the
consecration (the most
important part) at Mass

Sit and listen to Jesus
talking to me at Mass



Children's liturgy of the word for this week



Gospel for 27th Sunday Year A

8th October 2023

Matthew 21:33-43

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, 'Listen to another parable. There was a man, a landowner, who planted a vineyard; he fenced it round, dug a winepress in it and built a tower; then he leased it to tenants and went abroad. When vintage time drew near he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his servants, thrashed one, killed another and stoned a third. Next he sent some more servants, this time a larger number, and they dealt with them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them. "They will respect my son" he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, "This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him and take over his inheritance." So they seized him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' They answered, 'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will deliver the produce to him when the season arrives.' Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures:

It was the stone rejected by the builders that became the keystone. This was the Lord's doing and it is wonderful to see?

'I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.'

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Discussion on the Gospel

The image of the vineyard was a famous one for Jesus' contemporaries as they considered that Israel was God's vineyard. Isaiah (see 1st reading) had used the same image to show that the People of God were not being faithful or fruitful. Are we any different?

Q: Jesus is talking about a vineyard. What is a vineyard? (A: A place where grapes grow for making wine.)

Q: What happened in the story that Jesus was telling? (A: Invite a summary of the key facts of the story.)

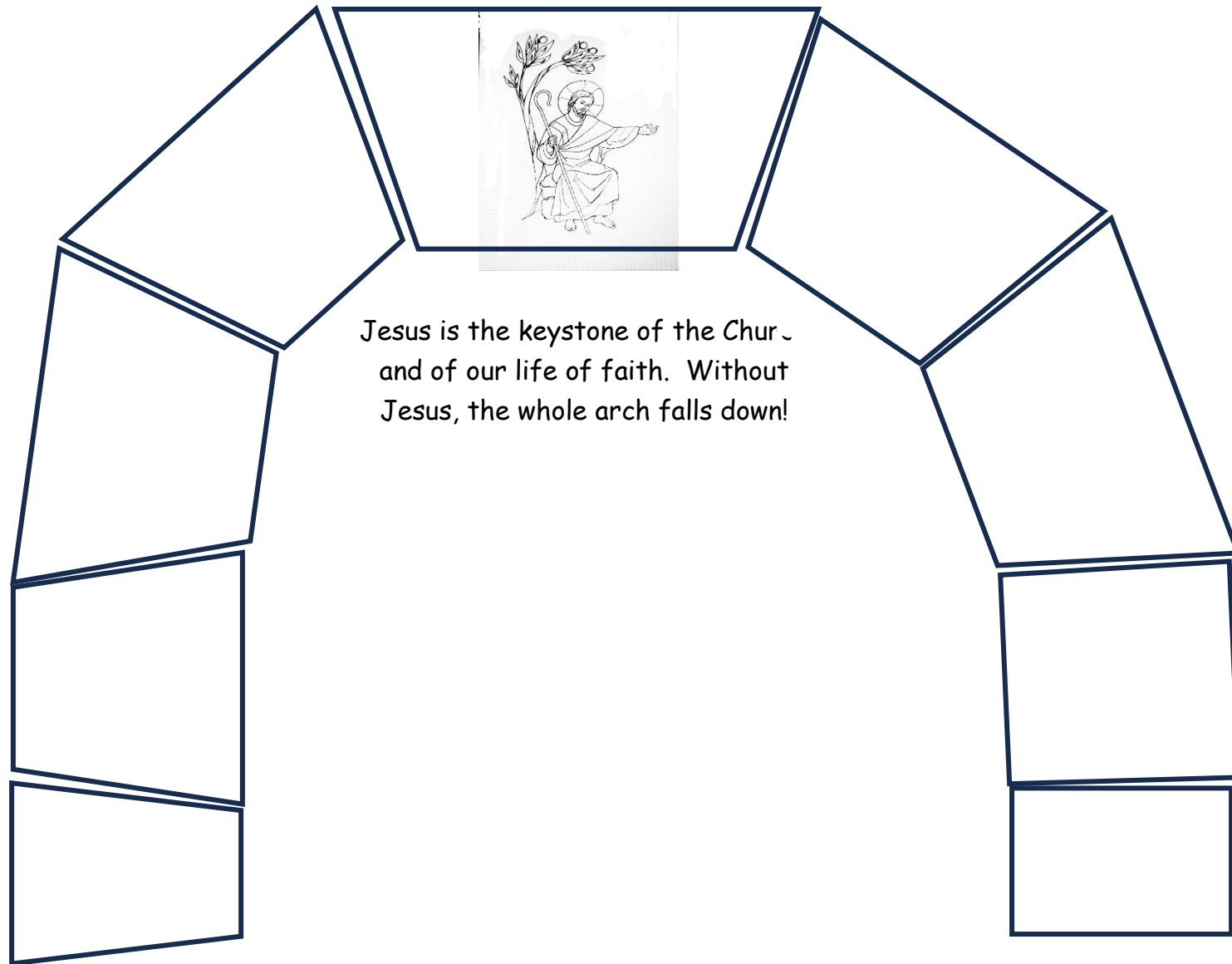
Q: Then Jesus starts to talk about buildings. In his days when buildings were made of stone, builders had to choose the right sized stone to fit as they built the walls. The "keystone" is the stone at the top of an arch. (If you have access to children's building bricks and can build a small arch then this might help). The "keystone" had to be a special shape so that it would support the arch without all the other stones falling down. Jesus is saying that although many people reject Him, in the end it is Jesus who is the keystone of our faith. Everything leans on Him. (Either show the physical arch or show the handout with the drawing of the arch with Jesus at the top.) What would happen if we took away the keystone, the stone at the top of the arch? (A: It would fall down.)

Q. We are a part of Jesus' arch because we belong to the Church. What would happen if we took Jesus away from the Church? (A: The Church would fall apart!)

Q. Let's look at the handout and think about what leans on Jesus in our life of faith. What can we draw or write in the stones that make the arch? (A: Open. You might need to make the first suggestion, e.g. being able to love my family, being obedient, the wonderful gift of the sacraments [Baptism, Holy Communion Confession, prayer, etc].)

Another way to do this would be to have these responses (and others) as word cards for the children to choose and copy onto their arches. Very young children could colour in the arch in different colours.

Draw or write how Jesus supports our faith in the different blocks



Children's liturgy of the word for this week



Gospel for 28th Sunday of Ordinary Time Year A

15th October 2023

Matthew 22:1-10

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people, 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come. Next he sent some more servants. "Tell those who have been invited" he said "that I have my banquet all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding." But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them. The king was furious. He despatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding." So these servants went out on to the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests.'

The Gospel of the Lord:

R/: *Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ*

Discussion on the Gospel

In this well-known parable (the shorter version is reproduced here) Jesus is reminding us that He calls us to share in wonderful glory of heaven. Several times the Bible refers to heaven being like a wedding feast where we the Church, the bride of Christ, are finally joined to Christ for ever! However, not everyone invited turns up! Two activities are suggested: one, an invitation to come to Mass and the other is a picture of heaven. This could be done as a group collage.

Q: What did the king organise? (A: a celebration/party/feast for his son's wedding.)

Q: What happened when the servants went to invite people to the wedding? (A: They refused to come. They seemed to have better things to do.)

Q: Whom did the King invite instead of the expected guests? (A: All the poor people they could find, good and bad alike.)

Q: Who do you think the "King" represents? (A: God the Father/Jesus.)

Q: What is the party that God the Father is inviting us to? (A: The biggest party ever... heaven!)

Q: These days if we want to invite someone to a party or an event, we send invitations; as emails or text messages, or in the post. How does God the Father invite us to His heavenly party? (A: Various: the Bible, Mass, prayers, the sacraments, teaching like Children's Liturgy of the Word....)

Q: Did you know that whilst we are at Mass, the saints and the angels can see us and are singing praises to God? We join in with that great hymn of praise at every Mass. Sometimes we just say it, sometimes we sing it. Do you know what prayer it is? (A: The Holy Holy, Holy....)

Q: Who would you like to invite to come to church with you next week? (A: Open.)

Q: Jesus invites so many people to come to know Him. He wants to help us to invite people. What could we say to them to invite them to come with us to Mass? (A: Open.)

Let's just finish by praying for someone we know and love who does not come to Mass. Shut your eyes and see them in your mind's eye. Now see Jesus giving them a big hug. Sometimes when we want to pray for someone all we need to do is to do this!

Dear _____

Jesus Christ loves you so much. He was born to die on the cross, and rise again, to lead you and me to His Father's home in heaven. Every Sunday at Mass, we hear Jesus talking to us in the Bible Readings and some people receive Him in Holy Communion. He wants us to come to know Him more and more and be His friends.

I would like to invite you to come to Mass with me so that together we can get to know Jesus better and become closer to Him.

**This is the prayer over the gifts from today's Mass.*

Love from _____



An impression of heaven.

We don't know what heaven looks like - many artists have tried to give us ideas and they all involve the Holy Trinity (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit), Our Lady, and the angels and saints. Sometimes God the Father is shown as a human being but here more correctly we see His hand reaching down to the Son, Jesus Christ. Can you find the Holy Spirit below Jesus? Can you finish off this picture by adding as many angels and saints as you can around the edge.



Image: Apse behind the high Altar in St. John Lateran, Rome.

Children's liturgy of the word for this week



Gospel for 29th Sunday of Ordinary Time Year A

22nd October 2023

Matthew 22:15-21

The Pharisees went away to work out between them how to trap Jesus in what he said. And they sent their disciples to him, together with the Herodians, to say, 'Master, we know that you are an honest man and teach the way of God in an honest way, and that you are not afraid of anyone, because a man's rank means nothing to you. Tell us your opinion, then. Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' But Jesus was aware of their malice and replied, 'You hypocrites! Why do you set this trap for me? Let me see the money you pay the tax with.' They handed him a denarius, and he said, 'Whose head is this? Whose name?' 'Caesar's' they replied. He then said to them, 'Very well, give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and to God what belongs to God.'

The Gospel of the Lord: R/
Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Discussion on the Gospel

We often separate our life of faith from our life "in the world" whether that is home, school, or work. Because we are baptised, we are joined to Jesus by the Holy Spirit who presents us to His Father. Our whole life therefore is about giving to God. Note that each person is created in the image of God (c.f. Gen. 26-27) and so Caesar, whose image was on the coin is created in the image of God. Giving to anyone with an open and loving heart is giving to God. The notes here would work well with a harvest Mass theme. The activity uses the offertory prayer for this Sunday. You may need to explain "grace" and "Mysteries" to young children.

Q: What did the Pharisees ask Jesus? (A: Should the Jesus pay taxes to Caesar)

Q: Caesar was the Roman emperor. The Romans had invaded Judea and the Jews did not like being ruled by pagan foreigners and hated even more, having to pay them taxes. What did Jesus ask the pharisees to do? (A: To show him a Roman coin.)

Q: Whose head was on the Roman coin? (A: Caesar's [the Roman emperor]'s.)

Q: What answer did Jesus give to the Pharisees? (A: Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.)

Q: This is a very clever answer because in reality, everything belongs to God and God only wants us to look after what we have on earth very carefully. For example, say your Mum or Dad or teacher gives you something of theirs to look after (may be add an example) how could you look after it carefully? (A: Open.)

Q: When they ask for it back what are you going to make sure? (A: That it's in the same or even better condition.)

Q: God gives us lots of things, what does He give us? (A: Open, e.g. All that we have, food, harvest, beautiful countryside, friends, parents, teachers, schools.)

Q: How can we take care of what God gives us? (A: Open e.g. Look after the countryside, treat other people as we would like them to treat us, not waste food etc....)

Q: When we take care of what God has given to us and share things with people without grumbling, then we are giving back to God what belongs to Him. Let's say "Thank you" to God for what we have been given. I'll start. Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for....? Invite the children to add their own prayers of thanks. When you have finished draw all these prayers together by saying, "We make these prayers Father in the name of Jesus Christ your Son through the Holy Spirit. Amen." (It's good for the children to hear the trinitarian doxology.)



Children's liturgy of the word for this week



Gospel for 29th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Year A

29th October 2023

Matthew 22:34-40

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they got together and, to disconcert him, one of them put a question, 'Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?' Jesus said, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also.'

The Gospel of the Lord: R/
Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Discussion on the Gospel

The message that "God loves me" is one that the children are probably very familiar with, but what does that mean in practice. How can we love God whom we can't comprehend and how can we love those whom we don't like? The suggested activity could be a bit messy but it's worth doing (practice first) as it shows the children that we CAN ONLY love God and neighbour because God has loved us first.

Q: What did the Pharisees and Sadducees ask Jesus? (A: What is the greatest commandment.)

Q: What was Jesus' answer? (A: We must love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind. And then we must love our neighbour as much as we love ourselves.)

Q: Who loves each one of us, no matter what we do? (A: God loves us with an unconditional love but the children may [quite correctly] answer that their parents, grandparents, friends, etc do as well.)

Q: God IS love, that is what He is "made" of. So, we can only love Him and other people because He loves us first. For example, what makes a car go? (A: Petrol, diesel or electricity.)

Q: We have to make sure that a car has the fuel needed so that it can go. It's the same with us, we need to be filled with love in order to love God and other people. How can we be filled with God's love? (A: Open, e.g. sacraments, prayers, reading the Bible, etc.)

Q: Lets see how this works in practice [move to the "activity" on the next page if you can]. If you can't do this in practice, try to describe it, e.g. "imagine a jug under a tap that keeps on running. First what happens to the jug? (A: It fills up with the water.)

Q: If the tap is not turned off, what happens when the jug is full? (A: The water overflows.)

Q: We are like that jug that is full of water. God fills us up with His love and then we can pour out His love to other people and when we love other people, we are loving God. What would happen if we put a lid on the jug and then put it under the tap? (A: The jug would not fill up with water.)

Q: If the jug is not full of water it cannot pour water out. So, when we don't allow God to fill us with His love, we can't love other people and we can't love God either. Let's let God fill us with His love right now: Shut your eyes and imagine that you are looking at Jesus and He is looking at you. See Him smile at you. He is calling your name. See his mouth saying your name. He says, "I love you". Feel that love of Jesus for you. It's like a warm feeling running through you. Tell Jesus that you love Him. Say anything else in your mind that you want to say to Him. When you are ready, open your eyes.

A demonstration of how we can love other people with the love that God gives us first.

You will need:

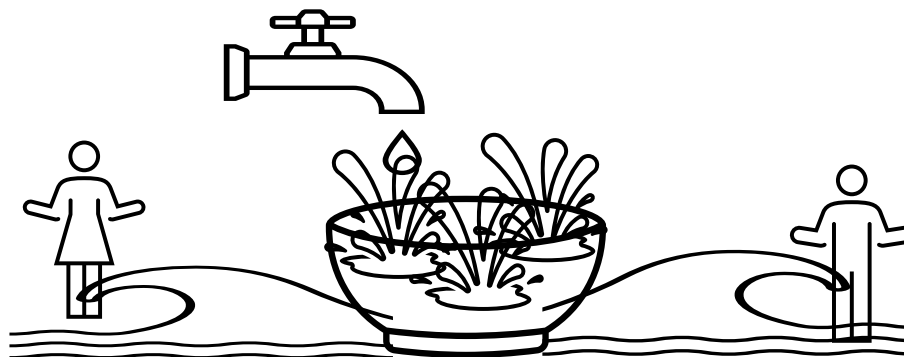
- Small jug, preferably one with a lid, or a saucer that covers the top of the jug.
- Large bowl, e.g. washing up bowl
- Either a sink complete with tap or watering can or larger jug filled with water.

The aim of this activity is to show that the Father's love for us does not stop and that He fills us with His love so that we can love Him back and other people.

- Place the small jug in washing up bowl and explain that the small jug represents each one of us.
- Turn on the tap or slowly pour the water from the watering can into the small jug, letting it fill with water, and then overflow into the washing up bowl.

Explain that the water from the watering can (or tap) represents the love of God which keeps on flowing. It fills us up and once we are full of His love, we can love other people (symbolised by the water in the washing up bowl). (If you are doing this in a sink you can carry the analogy on as the washing up bowl will fill and overflow to represent God's love being passed on in the world.)

- Now empty the small jug and cover it with the lid or saucer to see what happens if we cover the jug. The water (love) does not fill us (the jug) but God's love never stops. He continues to love but we can't love, without His love first.



When I let God, who is
Father, Son and Holy
Spirit, fill me up with His
love, then I can love Him
back and also love other
people!

How wonderful is that!



The bowl
represents Me
being filled with
God's love.

As you colour in this picture, think about who God is asking you to love more!