



SUNDAY SCRIPTURE ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES

March 4 to March 25, 2018

BY SR. KAREN BERRY

4 MARCH Third Sunday of Lent

READINGS: Exodus 20:1-17; 1
Corinthians 1:22-25; John 2:13-25

“In those days, God delivered all these commandments.” (EXODUS 20:1)

Communities need structure and guidelines.

Primary:

1. Begin by brainstorming with the children: what rules are they asked to follow at home and at school? List responses on the board. Choose various examples from the list and ask the children how keeping each rule makes things better. For whom? When? What not-so-good thing might happen if the rule isn't kept?
2. Today's first reading describes the commandments God's people received in the desert at Mt. Sinai. God knew that if the people wanted to be a community, they would have to follow certain guidelines to make it work. For example, if they killed each other or stole from each other, they would never be a loving family of God's children. Use a poster to teach the commandments God gave to the people. Apply the spirit of each commandment to something children can do. Relate commandments to some of the rules listed on the board. Let each child draw

a picture of how he or she can keep one of the commandments.

Intermediate:

1. Teach or review the Ten Commandments. Explain that

today's first reading tells the story of the Israelites receiving those commandments from God at Mt. Sinai. Using a map of the region, show where that occurred. Ask



PHOTOS (L-R, T-B): PUBLIC DOMAIN, JAVARMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK



what would happen if communities didn't have any rules: what would life be like in our cities and neighborhoods if the Ten Commandments didn't exist? What would life be like in our homes and classrooms if there were no rules?

2. Sing "Together We Can!" by Carey Landry (North American Liturgy Resources) to celebrate sharing, caring, working and playing together, and being a community. Tell the students to imagine themselves as the Israelites singing this song after receiving God's commands.

Secondary:

1. Using a map, locate the setting for the first reading. After a student proclaims the reading, discuss the necessity of rules and guidelines for people attempting to survive together. Take the discussion beyond survival and talk about how to develop a loving, caring community.

2. Assign students to research the

moral codes of various religions of the world. What kind of behavior do these religions require of their members? After students report on this research, compare the moral codes to the Ten Commandments. Note that every major religion has some form of the "Golden Rule." A poster listing these is available from Pflaum Publishing Group in Dayton, Ohio (1-800-543-4383). The universal human recognition of how people should treat one another says much about the built-in sense of morality given to us by our Creator.

11 MARCH Fourth Sunday of Lent

READINGS: 2 Chronicles 36:14–16; 19–23;
Ephesians 2:4–10; John 3:14–21

"Whoever, therefore, among you belongs to any part of his people, let him go up, and may his God be with him!" (2 CHRONICLES 36:23B)

King Cyrus of Persia taught the world to be tolerant of all religions.

Primary:

1. Before the lesson, research

rituals that are practiced in the holy places of various religions and bring pictures or books to use when you explain these worship practices to the children. Review the important elements of the Mass and explain why we celebrate this ritual every day in Catholic churches. Then print these words on the board: Christian church, Jewish synagogue, Muslim mosque, Sikh gurdwara, Shinto shrine. While explaining how others honor what is sacred to them, use a map to show places in the world where these religions are followed.

2. Emphasize that children all over the world learn about God from their families and follow the religious practices passed down to them. It is important to celebrate our religious rituals and seasons faithfully, and to respect people who do this differently than we do.

Intermediate:

1. Collect children's books about world religions from the library. Assign students to small groups,



Invite students to share their essays.

18 MARCH
Fifth Sunday of Lent

READINGS: Jeremiah 31:31–34;
Hebrews 5:7–9; John 12:20–33

“Now is the time of judgment on this world.” (JOHN 12:31A)

Would Jesus have a reason to speak those same words today?

Primary:

1. Display flashcards with these words: stealing, shooting, hunger, bombs, terrorism. Ask volunteers to come forward, choose a card, and say something about what they have heard regarding that problem in our country or world. Replace each card so other children may comment on the same word. Then display a second set of cards with these words: sharing, protecting, feeding, healing, kindness. Let the children talk about how these actions can help the problems in set one.

2. Pray for people experiencing any of the pain discussed today, and for those who are helping and healing. Ask God to judge us by the good we do and bless our world with peace.

Intermediate:

1. Jesus told his disciples that God would bring judgment on the earth, but by his death Jesus would draw everyone to himself. Ask the children if anything is happening in the world today that God could make a judgment about. What do we need Jesus to save us from now?

2. Provide drawing paper and art supplies for students to express a visual prayer that depicts something happening for which God

giving each group one religion to learn about, and providing them with appropriate resources. Direct each group to make a poster illustrating interesting things they learned about their assigned topic.

2. Let groups report on what they learned and display their posters. Tell the story of King Cyrus of Persia, who believed people should be free to worship God in whatever way they chose. When Persia conquered Babylon, the Jewish people living in captivity were released to rebuild Jerusalem and their Jewish faith. Tolerance for the beliefs of others is important for living in peace with all people.

Secondary:

1. Use ancient and modern maps to show the territory of Iran as ancient Persia. Although Iran’s

relationship with Israel is not good today, stories from the ancient world paint a different picture. Read Sunday’s first reading together. Explain that Persia eventually conquered Babylon and took over its territory (modern-day Iraq). Cyrus, the Persian king, believed in religious freedom for all. He set the Jews free from Babylon to rebuild the Jerusalem and the Temple and resume their religious practices.

2. Direct students to write opinion essays on these topics:

- a. Tolerance of other people’s religions contributes to peaceful coexistence.
- b. Respect for others’ beliefs broadens our own understanding of God’s love for all people.

might judge our world, and to include in the drawing someone or some group who is trying to help. On the back of the picture, write a prayer to Jesus as savior of the world. Invite students to display their pictures and read the prayers.

Secondary:

Choose a student to read Sunday's Gospel, then ask the class what was troubling Jesus besides his upcoming death. Why did Jesus feel it was a time of judgment on his world? What would he see as reasons for judgment on our world today? List responses on the board, creating some broad categories like terrorism, greed, power, racism. Elicit from the students some harmful results of these human failings, such as death, climate change, war, hatred, and fear.

3. Assign students to groups of four and tell each group to choose one of the categories from their list above. Make a poster illustrating that evil and its consequences. Scatter words or phrases of prayerful intercession around the poster. After groups present their posters to the class, pray together, calling on Jesus to save our world from sin. Include opportunities for students to express ways they can make our world better.

25 MARCH Palm Sunday

READINGS: Isaiah 50:4–7; Philippians 2:6–11; Mark 14:1–15:47 (or 15:1–39)

“At the name of Jesus every knee should bend ...” (PHILIPPIANS 2:10)

How can we revere the name of Jesus?

Primary:

1. Write the word *genuflect* on the board, asking the children what

it means and why we genuflect in church. Show the proper way to do this, and let them practice. It isn't a “squat”; one knee should touch the floor. In the Bible we read in one of St. Paul's letters that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bend” (Philippians 2:10). Genuflection is a sign of great respect.

Why did Jesus feel it was a time of judgment on his world? What would he see as reasons for judgment on our world today?

2. Take the children to the church and have them genuflect toward the tabernacle before entering the pews. Talk about Palm Sunday and the special event we remember by celebrating with palms. Tell the story of this holiest week of the year, pointing out what will happen in the church during this week: washing feet during Mass on Thursday and stripping the altar, carrying and kissing a cross on Friday, baptism of new converts on Saturday evening, many flowers decorating the sanctuary on Easter. Encourage the children to come to church with their families on these special days.

Intermediate:

1. Read Philippians 2:6–11 to the class and ask how Paul invites us to honor Jesus. What name do we have for “bending the knee” as a sign of respect when we come into a church? Where should we face when we genuflect? Tell the children that we are beginning the holiest week of the year. Divide the class into three groups, giving

each group resources, coloring pages, and worksheets for learning about one of the days in the Triduum: Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday. Tell them to use these materials to find out what we remember and celebrate on each day, how the Church does this, and what we can expect to see and do if we come to church on that night. Have each group share their reports.

2. Supplement each report with other important facts about the story of Jesus or the liturgical practices which are part of these days. Share your own experiences of taking part in the Triduum, and encourage the students to participate with their families.

Secondary:

1. Ask a student to read Philippians 2:6–11. Discuss the humility and obedience of Jesus, his tremendous sacrifice that we will commemorate in a special way this week, and the profound respect we show to him when we genuflect before the tabernacle or bow our heads at the mention of his name.

2. Brainstorm with the class other names for God or Jesus with which they are familiar — titles which identify characteristics, attributes, or accomplishments of God (examples: Creator, Redeemer, Father, Savior, Adonai, Christ). List these on the board. Encourage the students to always revere the names and titles of God and Jesus and never to use them disrespectfully. **T**

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