A Cosmic Mass for Children

Seán Ó'Laoire, Tír na nÓg, September 1, 2010

This booklet is a preliminary attempt to create a Eucharist that is suitable for children. I am trying to teach mystical theology in a way that engages both their great imaginations and their personal experiences. Its emphasis is on a cosmic spirituality where all of God's creatures are beloved and which builds upon and further encourages children's innate love of all life forms.

R = Reader · C = Children · E = Everybody

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

GETTING READY FOR THE VISIT TO GOD

The Mass is like a trip to visit God. It should be an exciting trip. Are you looking forward to it? And, usually, before we visit somebody important, we want to clean up and look our best. But God isn't fussy about what we are wearing, or if our hair is combed. God is only interested in the condition of our souls - whether or not we are loving and forgiving; and kind and compassionate.

QUICK CHECKLIST

So let's do a quick check inside. Please close your eyes. Think back over the last week and ask yourself these ten questions:

1. Did I remember, at the beginning of each day, to thank God for the gifts of life?
2. Did I remember, at the end of each day, to thank God for the gifts of life?
3. Did I use any bad words?
4. Have I been loving to my parents or was I rude to them?
5. If I have brothers or sisters, have I been loving to them or was I rude to them?
6. Have I been loving to my friends or was I rude to them?
7. Have I been loving to the animals I met or was I unkind to them?
8. Have I told any lies?

9. Have I gossiped about anybody?
10. Did I steal anything?

APOLOGIES

If I have failed in any of these ways, I now want to say, "I am sorry." And, if I get a chance, I will apologize directly to those whom I have hurt.

THE WATER SLIDE

Now imagine that you are on a fun water slide that will take you into a great swimming pool. Just before you hit the water, you pinch your nose shut; and as you rush into the water it wipes your soul clean. You come up for breath laughing and then you see God, sitting at the edge of the pool. God is laughing too, and is very, very happy to see you.

SINGING TO GOD

So, let's sing a song to God; a song that the first peoples of America used to sing. It speaks of life as a river, and of God as the sea. The number four was special to those people, so let's sing it through four times:

The River is flowing, flowing and growing; the river is flowing, down to the sea. Mother carry me, child I will always be; mother carry me down to the sea.

SECTION 2 - HEARING GOD'S WORD

READING

Now we will read a story. This will be done either by one person or by a group. Use your imagination as the story is being read: Can you see things? What sounds do you hear? What emotions are you feeling? Can you see yourself taking a part in the story; or are you simply watching it?

DISCUSSION

· Can you tell the story in your own words?
· What did you learn from this story?
· If this story could help you to make a change in your life, what change would you make?

PRAYING FOR THE WORLD

Take a moment to think and then tell us what or whom you would like to pray for today. When each person is finished, the rest of us will say, "Loving God, hear our prayer."

SECTION 3 - GIVING GOD GIFTS

PÁRAIC'S SIX-PENNY SHOES

Once, long, long ago, on my mother's birthday, my five-year-old brother, whose name is Páraic - that's the Gaelic form of Patrick - gave her a gift of six pennies (worth about a dime) and told her to buy herself a new pair of shoes! My mother thanked him; then she added another $30 to the dime and bought herself new shoes. Páraic was very happy and was convinced that it was his money that had bought the gift. And, of course, the dime that he gave her was money that my mother had given to him a few days before. And that is precisely what we are going to do now. We are going to give gifts of bread and grape juice to God, so God can turn them into the presence of Jesus.

SHARING OUR FOOD WITH GOD

When Seán lifts up the bread, we will all say:

God, you made everything; / You made the seeds that became the wheat; / You made the farmers that grew the crops; / You made the bakers who turned the wheat into bread. / We bring it to you now, / So that we can eat together. / You use our hands to offer it to yourself; / You use our mouths to eat it on your behalf. / We are your hands; / We are your body. / Thank you so much.

SHARING OUR DRINK WITH GOD

When Seán lifts up the cup, we will all say:

God, you made everything; / You made the vines that produced the grapes; / You made the farmers that grew the crops; / You made the vintners who turned the grapes into juice. / We bring it to you now, / So that we can drink together. / You use our hands to offer it to yourself; / You use our mouths to drink it on your behalf. / We are your hands; / We are your body. / Thank you so much.

SECTION 4 - A COSMIC JOURNEY

HONORING GOD

R God, you are like a great dancer. You dance with real stars; you dance with big galaxies; you dance with planets; you dance with the wind; and you dance with the rain. And so we honor you.

C Yes, we honor you.

R God, you are like a famous artist. You paint sunrises and sunsets; you paint the feathers of birds; you paint the wings of butterflies; you paint the petals of flowers; and so we honor you.

C Yes, we honor you.

R God, you are like a writer. But the leaves in your greatest book are the leaves on the trees; and the exclamation points are the tall redwoods. And so we honor you.

C Yes, we honor you.

R God, you are just like a musician. You make music in the wind; you make music in the waves; you make music in the rain; you make music in the thunder. And so we honor you.

C Yes, we honor you.

R God, you are brilliant at Math. You can count all of the stars; you can count all of the grains of sand on all of the beaches of the world. And so we honor you.

C Yes, we honor you.

R God, you are like a great scientist. You made everything, and you help us figure out how everything works. Everything, from tiny atoms to huge planets. And so we honor you.

C Yes, we honor you.

R God, you are like an architect. You teach birds how to make nests; you teach spiders how to make webs; you teach mothers how to make babies; and so we honor you.

C Yes, we honor you.

R God, you sent Jesus to teach us; to heal us; and to bring us into communion with you. And so we honor you.

C Yes, we honor you.

E *Once, when Jesus was eating with his friends, he wanted to show that planet Earth feeds us from her own body, just like a mother does. So he took some bread and he blessed it and he broke it into pieces for each of them.*

E *Then Jesus said, "I am a gift from God. When you eat with me, you share my life and you share my love. Every time you have a meal together, you should remember that you, also, are a gift from God."*

E *Then Jesus took a cup filled with grape juice and he blessed it. He said, "This grape juice reminds us that we are all sisters and brothers. When we drink it together we must remember that all food comes from God. And so we must share our food with all the people and all the animals of the planet."*

R Let's sing a song to thank God.

[Led by the choir we sing a song to praise God]

REMEMBERING

R God, you are like a great ocean playing with waves and playing with tides. You give food and a home to all kinds of fishes. Help us to remember.

C Yes, help us to remember.

R God, you are like a playful little lamb running about with the butterflies, in a meadow filled with flowers. Help us to remember.

C Yes, help us to remember.

R God, you are like a mighty forest filled with trees and shrubs and grasses, that give food and shelter to all kinds of birds and animals. Help us to remember.

C Yes, help us to remember.

R God, you teach us that everything on the planet is sister and brother to us. The rocks are; the plants are; the birds are; the fish are; the animals are; the insects are; even the slowly moving snails are. And Old Turtle is. Help us to remember.

C Yes, help us to remember.

R God, you teach us that all humans are sisters and brothers to us; whatever country they live in; whatever color their skin is; whatever language they speak; whatever religion they follow; help us to remember.

C Yes, help us to remember.

R God, please ask all of these brothers and sisters of ours to help wake us up fully so that we can love without fear; so that we can shine light into the darkness; so that we can bring life out of death. Amen, may it be so.

E *Amen, may it be so.*

SECTION 5 - FEEDING EACH OTHER

THE PRAYER THAT JESUS TAUGHT US

Once, when Jesus was walking along the road, a group of his friends said, "Teach us how to pray." And he did. Here is the prayer he taught them:

God, you are our Father and our Mother; you live in heaven. May all people respect your name; may the good things that you want become the way we do things on our planet, Earth, just like they are done in heaven. Help us to make sure that every creature has enough food, today. And allow us to experience your unconditional love, so that we can love each other unconditionally. Help us to not give in to bad suggestions but, instead, to turn our faces to the Light.

SHARING OUR FOOD WITH EACH OTHER

Seán will now break the sacred bread, so that each person, in turn, gets some. When you get your piece, turn to your left and give it to the person on your left, saying, "This is a gift from God." That person will then eat it. We will go around in a clockwise manner until everybody is fed.

SHARING OUR DRINK WITH EACH OTHER

Seán will now offer the cup of grape juice, so that each person, in turn, gets some. When it's your chance to hold the cup, turn to your right and give it to the person on your right, saying, "This is a gift from God." That person will then drink from it. We will go around in a counter-clockwise manner until everybody has had a drink. Thus each person will give and receive during the meal.

A SHORT MEDITATION

Seán will then go to offer Communion to the adults. While he is away for a few minutes I want you to close your eyes and imagine some person or some animal, some where in the world, who is very hungry. I want you to visit them and help them.

SECTION 6 - FINISHING UP

SHARING THE MEDITATION WITH EACH OTHER

When Seán comes back, each person will have a chance to tell us where they went, whom they found and how they helped.

FINAL BLESSING

All of us will pray as following for the world. It is an old blessing translated from the Gaelic.

May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, and rains fall soft upon your fields. And until we meet again, May God hold you tenderly in the palm of Her hand.

The Mass is ended; Let us go to bring peace to our world. Thanks be to God.

From spiritsinspacesuits.com. Written by Fr. Seán Ó'Laoire for the Companions on the Journey community.