Paraliturgy: an aid to prayer development for mentally retarded children

Mary Hamilton

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THE PARALITURGY: AN AID
TO PRAYER DEVELOPMENT
FOR MENTALLY RETARDED CHILDREN

by

Sister Mary Hamilton, C.N.D.

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A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

An eminent Canadian Religious Educator expressed a challenge to all catechists: "The 'yes' of faith does not spring from knowledge only --- but must be a full response of the whole man" to God's invitation to a living faith. How does one awaken this living faith in children? "The first step --- is to teach them to pray" for "there is no Christian vitality without prayer." ¹

Another religious educator, Reverend Lothar Zenetti, suggests that "the child's capacity for God slumbers in his unconsciousness; it must be awakened and molded."²

Contemporary studies and research³ in religious education stress the fact that faith must become a living, conscious and

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active faith rather than a summary of truths to be believed. Religion must become a way of life.

I have come that man may have life and have it to the full. (Jn. 10:10). Life to the full implies physical, psychological, and spiritual life. Basic to the development of spiritual life is the development of prayer life, for prayer is "the most spontaneous and the most personal expression of religion."4

If prayer is both index and means of spiritual growth, then growth in religion should be equated with growth in prayer for "it is here that religion must be tested and appraised."5

If Clark's criterion is valid, how then can prayer, not only be tested, but more importantly developed?

On the other hand, it has been noted that the prayer of children is largely petition, often egocentric, mere formula and devoid of either gratitude or contrition.

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One of the chief criticisms of parents regarding the new methods in religious education is that of their children's inability to "say their prayers." Bissonnier asks, however, whether it is a question of "knowing their prayers" or of "knowing how to pray." He comments on the risk that the "formula becomes a sort of screen between the child and God. "Prayers are said 'before God' but not 'to God.'"6

He reaffirms, however, the value of the use of vocal prayers in order to participate in the prayer life of the community.

The purpose of this study is to probe even further. Can a mentally deficient person grow in prayer?

One religious educator seems to answer affirmatively.

For the person whose developmental rate is slow, a gradual integration of appreciation, understanding and moral responses will be needed if beliefs are to permeate the very structure of his personality.7

Does one therefore begin with "appreciations, understandings and moral responses," or does one begin with the retarded child's prayer? If one elicits to begin with the latter he is faced with a specific problem: how can prayer growth be fostered (as well as evaluated) among handicapped children, especially among those who are intellectually limited and affectively egocentric? Fortunately in recent years the church, as

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well as society, manifests a growing appreciation of the value, dignity and needs of the retarded. This understanding has led to endeavors on the part of educators to assist them in intellectual and spiritual growth.

Specific characteristics of the retarded present difficulties in the development of prayer. Growth in prayer is influenced to some extent to growth patterns in other areas. Cognitive development, maturation and life experiences contribute to his readiness for prayer. He may be limited by language difficulties, poor self-concept, distractability, short attention span and failure to grasp abstract terms. He thinks concretely, reaches stages of development more gradually and remains for a longer period in an egocentric state. Life experiences may not be in conformity with either his C.A. or his M.A.

Bissonnier points out on the other hand that even though his intellectual development may be retarded his spiritual development may not. His intuitive sense of God may compensate for his intellectual retardation. Yet as Bissonnier remarks "his means of expression are sometimes so primitive that ... he will poorly show what he may deeply feel and will even disconcert us by his words or his attitude." 8

Many factors must be considered in the attempt to answer the question, "Can a mentally deficient child grow in prayer?"

There are a variety of ways to answer the above question. One way is to test the effectiveness of certain religious

techniques and discover among them, those most effective in fostering prayer growth. One of the techniques used in this study was a paraliturgical presentation of Lenten themes.

Justification for the Study

An analysis and observation of the habitual prayers of children reveal the prevalence of egocentric and petitionary prayers, but rarely prayers of gratitude or of sorrow. Likewise prayers are seldom related to scriptural or liturgical themes. The proposed study was undertaken with a view to see to what extent an integration of scripture, music and liturgical signs would help to add a further dimension to prayer life.

Limitations of the Study

The children at St. Coletta School live in a religious atmosphere, where prayer, Mass and religious instruction form part of their daily schedule. Is the success of the program due in some degree because of this factor?

In an effort to allow for this variable, children enrolled in public schools while living at home and attending a special education C.C.D. program were included in the program. In an analysis of the audio tapes, the researcher evaluated the progressive stages in prayer attitudes.

The compressed time element did not allow for a gradual approach from a series of lessons on a theme to a culminating

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celebration. In this case the paraliturgies were both educative and celebrative. In the case of the Madison group, the celebration was a preparation for Mass.

The difficulty in actually evaluating prayer responses is a limitation. For many, response in prayer is too deep-rooted and personal to be expressed vocally.

Since groups A and B belonged to separate classes and were classified with a consideration of C.A. and M.A., no further grouping was done. The students in Group C (Madison) were instructed by individual catechists and were not grouped prior to the study. They were not as well acquainted with each other as the students in Group A and B.

Definition of Terms

Paraliturgy: "An unofficial service, conducted in the manner of a liturgical service." 10 As used in this study it designates a celebration which is educative as well as celebrative.


Symbol: A symbol is a "sign which posses in itself all that we need to pass from a sensible reality to a super-spiritual

Paulhus affirms that, although the extremely talented might grasp the significance of symbols by studying them rationally, ... the mentally retarded, who cannot reason about faith are open to the theological life of communion with God, by another route.\textsuperscript{12}

Egocentricity: A childhood characteristic, manifesting an apparent unwillingness to "leave one's inner world." It differs from egoism in that he sees himself as center of his own world and has great difficulty in "being interested, knowing, understanding and comprehending."

A Liturgical Sign: Is an indispensable bridge between the profane and sacred levels of reality because it participates in both.\textsuperscript{13}

Stages: Successive developmental periods of intelligence, each one characterized by a relatively stable structure that incorporates developmentally earlier structures in a higher synthesis. The regular sequence of stage-specific activities is decisive for intellectual development rather than chronological age.

Piaget's stages of development are divided into three main areas:

Sensorimotor: The characteristic mode of knowledge of the first stage of intelligence in which the form of knowledge is tied to

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\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 38.
the content of specific sensory input or motoric actions. It is also referred to as practical intelligence (ages 0-2).

**Pre-operational:** The pre-operational stage is divided into two sub-stages: a) the sub-stage of pre-conceptual thought (ages 2-4) which marks the beginning of what Piaget calls conceptual intelligence, where adaptations begin to be mediated by signs and symbols, particularly words and images; b) and the sub-stage of intuitive thought (ages 4-7).

**Operational:** The stage which marks the advent of rational activity in the child. It is divided into: a) concrete-operational (ages 7-11), which begins with some real system of objects which the child perceives. Piaget terms 'operation' as an internalized action which can return to its starting point; b) formal operational (ages 11-16), a stage which marks the emergence of formal thinking, which is capable of reflecting on operations or on their results.\(^1\)

Kohlberg, a psychologist in the cognitive development school of Jean Piaget, charts moral development on three levels:

**Pre-conventional:** Where moral value resides in external, quasi-physical happenings, in bad acts, or in quasi-physical needs rather than in persons or standards. The pre-conventional level is divided into two stages: a) Stage 1 is characterized by "obedience and punishment orientation, ... with egocentric deference to superior power ... and with objective responsibility;"

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b) Stage 2, with a naively egoistic orientation, and where right action is that which satisfies one's own needs and occasionally those of others.

**Conventional:** Where moral value resides in "performing good or right roles, in maintaining the conventional order and the expectancies of others." The conventional is also divided into two stages: a) Stage 3 is manifested by a "good-boy, good-girl" orientation to approval, and to pleasing and helping others; b) Stage 4 manifests an orientation to authority and to the support of social order.

**Post-conventional:** Where moral value resides in conformity by the self, to shared or shareable standards, rights or duties. The post-conventional is also divided into two stages: a) Stage 5 is manifested by a legalistic orientation to rules and duties; b) Stage 6 is manifested by a "conscience or legalistic" orientation.15

**Research Question**

The writer suggests that paraliturgies can be effective ways of developing prayer life among children at the pre-operational and concrete operational stages.

Specifically the writer raises the question: Do certain Lenten paraliturgies conducted among mentally retarded groups foster development in prayer attitudes?


CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

"We must lift high our lamp of faith that it may show us what prayer is and what...its power and dignity. Into the darkness we must whisper our prayer 'Lord, teach us how to pray.'"\(^1\)

The comprehension of the concept of Christian prayers has evolved in various forms and various stages since that memorable day when Jesus' disciples made a sincere request: "Lord, teach us to pray." (Luke 11:1) Jesus' answer provided a basis for the best guidelines for perfect prayer, since the "Our Father" summarizes all its forms.

The Gospel often speaks of the prayer of Jesus (Lk. 3:21; 5:16; 9:29; 10:21; 11:1, 22, 32). He prayed publicly as well as privately, before important events and decisions (Lk. 3:31; Mt. 14:23; Heb. 5:7). His prayer was continuous (Jn. 1:51; 4:34; 8:29; 11:41). Although He taught His disciples to pray in the words of the Our Father, He stressed the importance of the spirit of prayer, rather than adherance to a formula. "In this manner you shall pray..." (Mt. 6:9).

The prayers of the early Christians manifested a close relationship between God and His children and the New Testament reveals requisites for prayer: perseverance (Mt. 7:7-11; 15:21; Lk. 11:1-13; 18:1-8; Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:17); sincerity and humility (Mt. 6:5-8); confidence and faith (Mt. 11:24; Lk. 17:5; James 1:5).

The communal prayer of the Christian community was indicated in Mt. 18:10; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2.

Several studies have been made with the purpose of assessing children's religious development and the most suitable means to promote it.

Supportive Research

Among supportive studies to this project are the research done by: Piaget, in the area of cognitive development; Kohlberg,


in moral development and Goldman, in the investigation of religious readiness. Hurlock, whose studies are concerned with physical and psychological stages of child development, links with her findings a comparable categorical development in the prayer life of the child.

Goldman's findings indicate that the developmental stages of thinking described by Piaget apply in the field of religious thought, and his work confirms and extends that of Harms. Piaget described the manner in which children's thinking proceeds from the pre-logical stage, through the concrete stage to the abstract stage. Harms, investigating concepts of God, preferred to speak of the "fairy tale, the realistic and the individualistic stages."  

Goldman argues that, where religion is concerned, there is a pre-religious stage, a sub-religious stage, and finally for some, a truly religious stage. He paid special attention to the transition from one stage to another, in order to understand more fully the factors influencing the development, and therefore is perhaps best understood if we regard him as discerning five stages of growth.

1. The stage of intuitive religious thinking. Here the children do not have the experience or the mental ability to think logically about religious ideals. Their understanding is conditioned by other ideas which have recently been in mind.

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2. **Transition stage one.** This is a time of unsuccessful concrete operational thinking, where the children become aware of the limitations of their intuitive thinking.

3. **The stage of concrete operational thinking.** According to Goldman, this lasts from 8 to 13 years. At this age, logical thinking is possible but within a restricted field, limited to thinking about visible and tangible objects and by the bounds of the child's experience.

4. **Transition stage two.** Here the abstract operational thinking begins but children attempt to apply this type of thinking to religious concepts.

5. **The stage of abstract operational religious thought.** This usually occurs from the age of 12 or 13, when children begin to see religion as a relationship with God.

Goldman points out, however, that the ages of transition from stage to stage vary with individuals, under the influence of many factors. He singles out "attendance at church or Sunday school, habits of prayer or Bible reading and attitudes of parents to religion."

Hurlock's classification of prayer development categorizes three stages in petitionary prayer:

1. Prayers concerning the variety and abundance of this world's goods for which "children are encouraged to thank God;"

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4 *op. cit.*, Goldman, p. 65.

2. direct petitions for special privileges;
3. prayers for personal help to do the things the child is unable to do for himself, prayers for self-improvement.

Hence, Hurlock would consider the prayer for "help in arithmetic" to be a higher category than the prayer for a "new bike."

Hubbard considers the theories of Piaget, Inhelder and Kohlberg as forming a framework for teaching the mentally retarded, if the general age ranges are considered as mental ages rather than chronological ages. Consideration must be given to the other stages of development and to the life experiences of the individual. Reference is made to Kohlberg's investigations regarding moral development and to his apprehension regarding a premature presentation of concepts which can be "learned with greater ease later." Inhelder's views are presented regarding the application of Piaget's theories to retarded children and to his proposition that mentally retarded children seldom pass beyond the first two stages of logical thinking. (See definitions of terms.)

When dealing with a retarded child, one must realize that this child may spend a longer period of time in each stage of development. This will have many implications for religious education and to the development of prayer life.

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Research in Prayer Development

Speaking for all children, Sister M. Charles Bryce suggests that "perhaps a measuring stick for the relevant effectiveness of our catechetical programs might be 'What is their prayer life like?'" She questions further, "But who can measure this?"

Elkind suggests that it can be done and sets out to show how. The purpose of his study was to trace developmental stages in prayer concept in the life of the elementary school child. He demonstrated that findings of Hodge (1931) and Heiler (1932) indicated that prayer evolved historically and culturally in three stages:

1. primitive or tribal;
2. ritual or national;
3. universalistic or individualistic.

His studies show that he considers that prayer evolves psychologically in a similar pattern. In collaboration with Long and Spilka, he studied the responses of 160 elementary school children and evaluated them. He found that the prayer concept

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seemed to develop in three stages related to ages:

C.A. 5-7: the level of things.
7-9: the level of words.
9-12: the level of thoughts.

W. H. Clark$^{11}$ in *The Psychology of Religion* describes several studies regarding prayer, particularly concerning motives: a study by Pratt$^{12}$ in *Religious Consciousness* and one by Ross$^{13}$ regarding *Religious Beliefs in Youth*.

Speaking specifically for the retarded child, Bissonnier stresses the importance of prayer for awaking a sense of God. He points out the difficulty in ascertaining prayer because of language handicaps. He notes, however, that even though his language is "deficient in abstractions and concrete in form, it is often rich in symbolism. We symbolize often and are often strangely impressed by symbols which we cannot express." He encourages educators to go beyond the "crude expressions" and understand the "religious significance of the child's gestures." The use of gesture, color, music and rite are stressed in his suggestions for developing prayer.$^{14}$


$^{14}$Henri Bissonnier, *op. cit.*, p. 147.
Paulhus in his doctoral study at the University of Lyons surveyed the catechetical apostolate towards the retarded in several countries. He stresses many of the concepts found in the research of Piaget. He affirms that the retarded persons are capable of intuition; faith is basically intuitive and, therefore, the retarded are capable of faith. Religious education provides for its growth, for if faith is intuitive, then the retarded are religiously educable. For intuitive processes the method is contemplative. Consequently, he stresses the necessity of symbol and gesture, which help to open up the inner life, and promote harmony between the inner and the outer life.

This role of symbolic communication is also stressed by Mesney and Obran. Their program is built upon the interiorization of religious experience based on human experience, integrated with a liturgical and biblical sign. Human experience, symbol, biblical and liturgical sign are all essential elements of a paraliturgy.

Sister Mary Theodore, O.S.F. who has "touched the lives and lifted the hearts" of thousands of retarded children points out that "the child with mental retardation may have little capacity for knowledge, but this does not prevent him from having


the power to love." This power to love will serve as an integrating force in all the basic elements of the paraliturgy.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of paraliturgical presentations, as a means of fostering prayer growth, one must examine research regarding liturgy, scripture and catechetics and their integration.

Integration of Scripture, Liturgy and Catechetics

Prior to recent catechetical and liturgical renewal, prayer was often considered in isolation. It was related, chiefly to specific times and places. Investigators analyzed different degrees and modes of prayer. New insights have led educators to consider prayer an essential goal, in all catechetical and liturgical activity. "Each lesson should result in prayer if our teaching is biblically, liturgically centered."

Prayer is not only integrated into catechetical and liturgical activities but into life itself. Bissonnier considers that the "awakening" of the retarded child to a life of prayer is "only a beginning -- only a high point. The child must discover that he can pray in his life, through all of his life, and understand, if possible, what is called a life of prayer." He stresses frequently the value of the retarded child's prayer. "It is from the mouths of those who can scarcely speak that you have drawn praise, O God, and even when others have forgotten

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You, their love will keep its fidelity."\(^{19}\)

Article 17 of the General Catholic Directory stresses the fact that catechetical activity is an "applied form" of the ministry of the Word -- "a pastoral activity." In the abstract, the work of catechesis is clearly distinguishable from "evangelization, liturgical preaching and theologizing." In the "concrete" however, they are "bound together and mutually supportive of one another."\(^{20}\)

Modern catechetical trends were extensively influenced by research in liturgy. Investigators in both areas were united in their common concern for the ministry of the Word. (cf. Article 17)

Through the influence of Jungmann\(^{21}\) and his followers, the renewal in catechetics fell into step with the advance of the kerygmatic renewal and the liturgical movement.

The first international study week held in 1959 at Nijmegen had its theme "Liturgy and the Missions."\(^{22}\) Even before Vatican II it was urging liturgical renewal. A year later the congress at Eichstatt, Bavaria, concluded that "there is

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latent in the liturgy a colossal wealth of meaning and a tremendous instructive power." 23 This congress formulated many specific proposals which have been implemented by Vatican II.

Liturgy

"The liturgy is the summit towards which the activity of the church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all her power flows." (C.D. Article 10)

The Vatican Document on the Sacred Liturgy, preceded by intensive research, resulted in a great awakening of appreciation of the prayer life of the church.

In Cardinal Paul Emile Leger's description of liturgy, he notes the integration of catechetics, liturgy, scripture and Christian living. In the liturgy a "dialogue is set up between the Word of God and the faith of the church. All who attempt to revive catechetics must "enter into the liturgy and its present revival." 24

Hofinger describes the liturgy as the "church's worship" and "this means above all prayer." He describes likewise its instructional quality: "the liturgy is a tremendously versatile catechetical picture book which makes the children familiar by means of their senses with the majestic mysteries of our faith." 25


Paraliturgical Celebrations

The renewal in liturgical, scriptural and catechetical studies stresses the need for their integration in order to promote a living faith. Paraliturgies are one means of response since they are liturgically, biblically and catechetically oriented.

The General Catechetical Directory (Article 25) reinforces the demand for a catechesis which will provide "active genuine participation in liturgy by forming the minds of the faithful for prayer, for thanksgiving, for repentance, for praying with confidence." 26

The spiritual life, however, is not confined to the liturgy for the Christian "must pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. 5:17) Prayer then must be related to daily life with all that it implies.

Article 79 (G.C.D.) stresses the importance of adapting the catechesis to the child's development.

Paraliturgical catechesis may be considered a means to respond to the directives of Vatican II and the General Catechetical Directory. In order to respond faithfully, each of the composing elements of the celebration--Bible, liturgy and catechesis--should be adapted to the child's rate of development.

The results of Elkind's study in the child's concept of religious identity have shown that before the ages of 11-12 most children are limited in their comprehension of religious concepts, as understood by adults. Yet the same study reveals

that true religious education feeds the emotions as well as the minds. "Contrary to popular belief, the child is most like the adult in his feelings and least like him in his concepts." "As a consequence a child can experience religious emotions before he can entertain religious thoughts." 27

Bissonnier assures catechists that, for the retarded child, "emotion is more important than reason and...no truth will reach him in a strained atmosphere." 28 An atmosphere conducive to prayer and reflection is essential for the success of the celebration. This atmosphere is the fruit of a proper balance between the "modes of communal expression: music, reading, silence, action and procession." 29

Implications for the Retarded Child

The retarded child deserves special consideration. Research 30 and experience both admit that the retarded are educable in faith, if faith is seen as experiential.

Paraliturgies must utilize and build upon human experience and life situations, in order to portray a spiritual reality.

"If there is a key to successful religion classes, the key is communication...essential to all communication is the readiness of the receiver to grasp the message...the child understands the supernatural only in the light of the natural." 31

28 Bissonnier, op. cit., p. 18.
29 Condreau, op. cit., p. 31.
30 Paulhus, op. cit.
One of the great problems in catechesis is to go beyond the intellectual level and reach that of the commitment of the whole person. Reverend F. Coudreau, who has developed a catechesis of "celebration" at the University of Lyons, France, is convinced that the celebration makes it possible to "make the step which constitutes the act of faith." 32

Transition From Human Experience To Spiritual Reality

The introduction and setting provide the human experience which the child requires. The spiritual reality or concept must be reached by means of some type of bridge or link between the human experience and the spiritual reality. This bridge is often a symbol in the setting, atmosphere, art, music activity or in the Word of God itself. One of the tasks of the catechist is to help the child make this transition. His facility in accomplishing this will depend greatly upon his life experiences, his concept of self, his level of maturity and upon his intuitive powers. The prayer life of the catechist, as well as the sincerity of his preparatory prayer will influence this fundamental stage in which both catechist and child are so actively involved.

Since the retarded child is often hampered by communication skills the world of symbols, signs and gestures is very meaningful to him. Because of his deficiency in grasping abstract

concepts the catechist must rely substantially upon his intuitive processes and the symbol becomes a media for intuitive knowledge.  

Van Caster, describing the symbol as "something of the created order which is set aside to mediate God's presence" reminds catechists that "official liturgical prayer "must be prepared by non-official prayer," formed by the circumstances of daily life: events of our life, themes which remind us of God--beauty of nature, material or spiritual needs and readings from the Bible.  

Advantages of Paraliturgies

The celebration has positive instructional value since it makes use of all the child's facilities, will, imagination, emotions, memory and many of his senses.

Since the retarded child may be lacking in language and communication skills, symbolism may become for him an avenue of communication. By his intuitive powers he may grasp the reality which the symbol represents, or its presence may recall previous experiences. Such symbols as light, outstretched arms, water, joyful music, a circle, a gesture of joy or of sorrow may have significant meaning for him.

Celebrations or paraliturgies facilitate repetition, which is essential for the retarded child. This entails not merely a

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33 Paulhus, op. cit., p. 31.

language repetition but the presentation of a central idea in a variety of ways.

In the paraliturgy, the child has an opportunity for expressing himself. To the extent that we furnish the child with occasions, we develop his personality and furnish him an opportunity to give of himself. "This is an authentic and fundamental religious education, a true advancement towards God."35

Forms of Paraliturgies

Paraliturgies may take various forms. Some provide a link between the lesson and the celebration of the liturgy. A study evaluating this method involving students from St. Coletta School was conducted by Sister Dorothy Glaister O.P. in 1972. Responses during the prayers of the faithful at the Mass were indicative of the value of the paraliturgical celebration as compared to a regular classroom session.

Other celebrations are the culminating point of a series of lessons on a particular theme. Such celebrations are used in several religion series.36

Celebrations may be used to commemorate special events: Baptism, First Communion, First Confession, Confirmation,

35 *op. cit.*, Bissonnier, p. 9.


Graduation, phases of the Liturgical Year or National Holidays.37 Home celebrations have been prepared by various writers38 to celebrate special family events.

The method used in this study was that of a celebration of Lenten themes which would serve as preparation for Easter. For the "journey to Heaven---begins with the dust of Ash Wednesday." The themes were exemplified in the words of the prayer: "Show your love with us, these days, as we look forward to the joys of Easter--so that they may be days of making Your Face shine before the eyes of our brothers."39

Summary

In the present chapter a survey was made of literature supportive to and relative to the religious education of the mentally retarded child. Included in the survey were studies made concerning the developmental stages of physical, intellectual and spiritual growth. The literature revealed the

39 Ibid., p. 74.


growing awareness and concern for the need for assistance in developing the prayer life of the child. An investigation of the role, value and use of paralitugies as a means of prayer development was included in the survey.
CHAPTER 3

Procedure

Research and observation indicate that retarded children can grow in prayer. The study described here analyzes the part which paraliturgies can play in this growth.

Population

Three groups of children participated. Groups A and B were students at St. Coletta School, a residential school for exceptional children in Jefferson, Wisconsin. The third group consisted of mentally retarded children who attend the weekly special religious education classes at Immaculate Heart of Mary School in Madison, Wisconsin.

The groups consisted of: A-12, B-12, C-7 students respectively. The mean C.A. of group A was 10.5; of group B, 14.3; and group C, 14. The mean M.A. of A was 5.2; of B, 6.7. The mean I.Q. of A was 48; of B, 49. No information was available to calculate the mean M.A. and I.Q. of group C. According to the researcher this group seemed to be higher in M.A. and in I.Q. because their responses indicated more advancement in reasoning.

Design

An attempt was made to do some pilot work in a Basic Training Group. Here the mean C.A. was 8.8. The mean M.A. was
3.7 and of the I.Q. was 38.9. Responses indicated that these children were still in the sensori-motor stage and required a different type of assistance in prayer development. They were not included in the paraliturgical study. A pilot study using paraliturgies integrated with "Commandment" themes was conducted with Group C.

In Groups A and B, three introductory lessons were taught in order to assess the relative readiness level of the children. The writer wished also to ensure that the children would be able to respond in a relaxed manner. Some of the music needed for the study was taught at this time.

An individual interview was held with the student in order to determine his prayer development as well as his understanding of certain Lenten themes: love, forgiveness, sorrow and new life.

The lessons for groups A and B were conducted in a group session on a daily basis over a four week period. The lessons for group C were conducted on ten consecutive Sundays. All the lessons were taught by the writer, sometimes with the assistance of the observers.

Twenty concepts based on Lenten themes were presented in a paraliturgical format. A special room disassociated from the classroom was used. The environment was arranged to facilitate a prayerful atmosphere. Children were seated in a semi-circular formation. Each day the background featured different posters, background music and concrete material symbolic of the theme. Records and music were also chosen to set the mood for the lesson.
A concealed tape recorder was used to assist in the evaluation of responses and the relative effectiveness of the themes and techniques used. In addition, evaluations of the themes and procedures were done in consultation with observers.

Evaluation

The method for evaluating the session was that commonly used by the classroom teacher: observation. The lessons and their techniques were evaluated in discussion with the observing teachers. Further evaluation was made by an analysis of the audio tapes, which provided the basis for measuring progressive growth in the children's prayer responses.

Summary

The study was conducted by means of paraliturgical celebrations with three groups of retarded children during the Lenten season of 1973. Art and Music activities were the creative follow-up exercises. Measurement of the effectiveness of these paraliturgies in fostering prayer development was carried out during and following the study.
CHAPTER 4
INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of the study is to ascertain the effectiveness of the use of paraliturgies in the development of the prayer life of the retarded child. In order to note development at different age levels and in different environments, three groups were chosen. Questions of the pre-test were repeated at the end of the study in order to assess apparent development.

Pre-Test

The pre-test, given to Group A and B, St. Coletta School, Jefferson, Wisconsin, was conducted in the form of a taped interview. (See Appendix A) Answers affirmed the assumption that because of the religious atmosphere of the residential school, the children knew formal prayers, were familiar with Mass responses and with several hymns. When questioned regarding "talking to God," the responses were chiefly formalistic and petitionary. Some replied I say "Our Father" or "Hail Mary." Others asked for a "nice day on Saturday" or on "my birthday," to go "home on the weekend" or help with "Arithmetic." Some prayers indicated a routine type of prayers for others, "God bless Mummy, Daddy, the Sisters, Group Parents, teachers." Answers manifested a reverence for prayer, indicative of their religious training.
Because of the proximity of Ash Wednesday and Lent, questions relative to the liturgical season were asked. Answers indicated that the children were aware that Ash Wednesday differed from other days. "Father blessed our heads." "He put something on our heads." "Mass was longer." Lent is a time for "being good" and for "giving up things."

Prayer was associated particularly with specific times and with specific places: "before going to bed, in the morning, in chapel, before meals." Older children tended to pray when "sad" or "upset" or when something is "hard."

While the prayer of petition is a laudable form of prayer, especially when it is used for others and for self-improvement, the writer merely calls attention to the fact that the answers did not include any prayers of thanks or of sorrow.

The words "forgive," "pardon," and "sorry" had strange connotations. Some reversed the syllables in "forgive," "give for," and "pardon" is "when you can't hear." When the question involved a life situation, "What would you do if someone hurt you, but said 'I'm sorry'?," only one child responded with the notion of forgiveness: "I'd give him a big hug." Others simply said "I'm sorry" or "I wouldn't do anything." One said "I'd hit him." When the teacher replied "Even if he said 'I'm sorry,' I'd hit him again." Language difficulties present such a problem in discussions with retarded children, that it is extremely difficult to make an accurate estimate of their attitudes, and one realizes that there are many thoughts and experiences which they are unable to express.
Group C, Orientations:

Group C, composed of students living at home, while attending the special religious education class at Immaculate Heart of Mary School, Madison, presented a different type of challenge. They came from different schools, and parishes and were accustomed to individual religious instruction on a weekly basis. Consequently, they did not manifest, at first, the spirit of unity and friendship which was observed in the children from St. Coletta School. As they became acquainted with one another and with the catechists of the other children, they became more relaxed and eager to respond. It was noted likewise that they did not have the repertoire of routine prayer and hymns that was evident in Groups A and E. They were children of ages 13-16, who, because of age, reading ability, and demonstration of reasoning development in their responses, indicated a slightly higher level of mental development.

Their pilot studies begun in January, 1973, and were based on the "Penance Cycle II" currently in use in the C.C.D. program which included lessons utilizing a scriptural approach to the Commandments. The Paraliturgies reinforced the lessons and served as a link between them and the Mass which followed. The scriptural passages of the paraliturgy were integrated with the scripture in the lessons and in the Mass.¹

Catechists, who were present with the students at the celebrations, assisted them in their participation and helped in the

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¹ op. cit., Sisters of St. Francis, Curriculum Guide.
evaluation of the sessions.

**Group C. Observation:**

Students displayed eagerness to share in the reading, discussion, music and subsequent activities. They requested the privilege of bringing to the Mass and of carrying in the Offertory procession, the symbols prepared in the celebration. They were happy to assemble posters to be used in the Easter Celebration and to prepare stoles symbolic of Baptism.

In the first session, although the reaction to the celebration was enthusiastic, the students felt timid in making an individual prayer response. In the sessions which followed, with the help and example of their catechists, they began to take part in prayer. Catechists noted that students used responses, prayers, and ideas from the paraliturgy as a response in the "Prayer of the Faithful," and in the homily of the Mass.

Besides providing this link with the liturgy, it enabled the participants to share prayer, reflection, music and discussion with others, an experience which was lacking in the individualized instruction. Catechists expressed the desire to have this type of communal experience as a means of establishing community in preparation for Mass.

On successive Sundays, the students became more involved in prayer responses and activities. During Lent, the celebrations were integrated with themes relative to the liturgy and to preparation for Easter. Involvement became more apparent especially during the lessons concerning renewal of Baptism themes. Students expressed a liking for the environment. "I
like it here." "It makes me feel like praying." "May I bring this to Mass with me?" "May I bring this home?"

"Jesus did many hard things for me. When my little brother bothers me, I'll try not to smack him this week. Maybe I'll play a game with him when he asks me."

Their prayer response was chiefly one of sharing love, love of God and others—following Jesus. "I'd like to follow Jesus by ..." "Thank you" prayers were facilitated by the use of slides and by the use of litany refrains:

"For the beauty of the earth, sky, trees, lakes, sunsets, rivers, lakes, we thank You, God, our Father."

Each child was given an opportunity to respond in prayer each day and many made a prayer response during the liturgy which followed the session. Because of the brevity of the session, the time lapse between them, and the lack of contact during the week, the prayer responses differed from those of Group A and B. Responses were gradually related to the theme. Since the catechists were with the children, they helped and encouraged them in their prayer.

The fact that they responded in prayer in the liturgy was one of the advantages of this method. In this case they obtained the objective of relating the paraliturgy to the Mass, of participating actively and meaningfully in the Liturgy, and of sharing a communal prayer experience.

Initial Days, Group A and B:

During the first three days, the students displayed eagerness and enthusiasm in participating in the celebration.
The introductory music provided a prayerful atmosphere and the students responded favourably to it. The response to questions concerning the introductory story and the Scripture was good, as was likewise participation in the music. However, when it was time for spontaneous prayer, it was noted that for these first three days, prayers were not related specifically to the scripture theme and were still petitionary. When the teacher asked, "What shall we talk to God about?" the students mentioned several interesting events and special needs, but at the time of prayer reverted to petitions and formulas. In Group B, there were three petitions for others: "that a sore leg be cured," "that someone get along well on a test," and that they might be allowed to "come back here again."

In Group A the younger children tended to focus attention on concrete materials: banners, candle, illustrative material, plants, fish, and needed assistance to bridge the gap between the sign or symbol and the religious reality. This was most apparent in the lessons on "Baptism," and "New Life," when the children became so fascinated by the illustrative material, that the teacher feared that the lesson would not result in prayer. When prayer time came, it was noted that the prayers were prayers of gratitude for God's gifts: plants, flowers, water, fish, pets, and all "living things." Thus, even though it was not the prayer envisaged by the teacher, it was prayer.

In Group B, the students appreciated the special setting, music, posters, but with more life experiences, were not so pre-
occupied with the novelty, and related the material more readily to the idea of Baptism and New Life. This was indicated in their responses: "Jesus, Light of the World, stay with me." "Jesus, Living Water, give me 'new life'."

Later Developments

After the third day in Group B, and after five days in Group A, there was a gradual development in relating prayer to scripture and in expressing other types of prayer: thanks, praise, and sorrow.

Prayers of thanks were encouraged by the use of slides, depicting beautiful scenery, and various gifts of God. Many prayers of thanks were noted at the conclusion of the lesson regarding the ten "sick men." Difference was gradually noted in both attitude and prayer response. It was noted that if the teacher says the first prayer, providing a model for prayer, there will be a greater prayer response relative to the theme. Responses indicated a better understanding of prayer: "When I pray I make quiet all around me." "When I pray I talk to God." I listen to God and I listen to you. (The teacher had reminded the children that listening to God is part of prayer.) There were many prayers expressing love of God: "Dear Jesus, I love You. Help me to love You 'more better.'"

Prayers of sorrow were expressed chiefly in the lesson where Zacchaeus said that he would change his life, make up for all that he had done wrong, in the lesson about the "hippie son," during the lesson on the Veneration of the Cross and following Jesus. Even though the children were assured that one
need not give specific incidents regarding reasons for sorrow:

"The other day ______ knocked the colors off my desk. I got mad and now I'm sorry." "I'm sorry I pushed the name tapes off the table 'cause I was mad. Now I'm sorry." "I threw my shoes under ______ bed, just to get even. I'm sorry now. That wasn't nice."

In the introduction to the story concerning the ten sick men, a story of a mother who prepared a surprise for her children was used. To the question, "What would you have done?" one response was "I'd run to Mummy and say, 'oh, Mummy I love you. You're so good.'" When the children ran out without thanking mother, a remark was made that it was "disgusting." "They sure wouldn't feel good when night comes."

Group B, the older children chronologically, manifested in their prayer and attitude a greater facility and attraction for quiet prayer and reflection. The younger children seemed to be attracted to activity and group responses and tended to repeat what others said. There was however, a definite progress from day to day.

The short attention span of retarded children had to be respected. To grasp the sequential pattern: music, scripture, liturgical sign, prayer, demands frequent repetition and frequent connecting links or transitional remarks: "In our singing, we asked Jesus....This is the way Jesus answered that question one day.....Jesus speaks to us in the Bible....What do you think He says to us today?" Increasingly they began to relate scripture themes to prayer and to life situations.
One day, when a picture was being shown to the class, one child in Group A said "let's not be like those mean guys who wouldn't let Zacchaeus get to see Jesus. We should move over so that ______ can see." In the story of the "hippie son," when using the flannel board, they moved the son very slowly back towards the father, but moved the father very quickly to meet the son.

Occasionally the younger children would focus attention upon minor episodes in the story, and need help to return to the main events. Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "Get down out of the tree." He said, "Be My guest, on my Brownie's honor." He said "Come to lunch." Another child asked, "And would they have cookies and everything?" When the teacher reminded them that Jesus invites us to a special Meal everyday, the students in Group B responded after further questions.

Activities such as moving their figure and banner along the special illustrative road to Easter, making banners, murals, white stoles and various group activities brought a ready response and they expressed eagerness to show the results of their activities to students in other classes.

Some children showed a characteristic mentioned by Goldman—that of focusing attention repeatedly upon the last notion in mind. In the lesson regarding "hands" and "offering," the teacher asked a question concerning hands which help. One child said "a cup of tea." Another thinking that she had said "cut cheese" repeated this. Then came a series, "cut ham, cut turkey, cut bread" and the teacher had to bring them back into focus.
The response of Group A indicated a gradual understanding of the Scripture message even though they experienced greater difficulty than the older pupils in relating their prayers to it.

The lessons which seemed to provide the greatest response in prayer were those involving a story: the story of Zacchaeus, the Ten Very Sick Men, the Hippie Son, Jesus Picks His Team and the lessons concerning Baptism. The story element, the pictures, slides, flannel board may have helped. In the lessons concerning Baptism, they seemed eager to relive all the Baptism ceremonies, to accept Christ's Call and to answer Him in their own words. The activity involved preparing the symbols, taking part in the ceremony of the Call, of Light, Living Water led to related prayer. One child, Group B, addressed Jesus as "Light of the World," and asked Him to "enlighten our minds," a phrase which he may have heard in chapel, but which he associated with the celebration. Another child referred to Jesus as "Living Water," "Who gives life to us." When asked what signs we can give to show that we forgive without words children replied "I'd shake hands." "I'd smile." "I'd say forget it." "I'd say it's O.K. We'll be friends." Similar phrases were given in the taped interview at the end of the study.

When asked how to show love during Lent, the children referred to the poster with the two signs "Love God. Love Others." They referred to them as the sign posts along the road. When asked about the leader on the road, one child pointed silently to the crucifix. On another occasion when the teacher asked
children for the signs of Jesus' presence in the room, they indicated the candle, the Bible, and the Crucifix, although the Crucifix had not been mentioned previously, in this group-
ing.

Analysis of the tapes indicated a progressive interest in the needs of others and in humanitarian needs: "peace for the sick, for the poor, blind, lame," particularly after the stories about Jesus' concern for the needy people whom He met along the road. In the prayers for others it was noted that instead of the routine "God bless ____ the prayers became more personal and individualized. ____'s father was in an accident. Let's pray for him. The prayers for self became less of the "give me" type and showed evidence of desire to improve: "For being better," "for being more kind," "less rough," "to shake hands instead of fighting."

In the analysis of the tapes, it was noted that two pupils in Group B and three in Group A showed little development in the time of the study. Their prayers were still routine, "God bless ___. All the other students indicated different types of prayer: praise, thanks, sorrow as well as prayers of peti-
tion, which included more prayers for others and for improvement of self. Two children in Group B and three children in Group A gave evidence of a special gift of facility in prayer.

This observation prompted the writer to question whether the apparent facility of expression in prayer may be due to a greater facility in language. On the other hand, did the fail-
ure to respond in the case of two pupils indicate a retarded
language development? Additional research beyond the scope of the present study is needed in this area. Observable results cannot be measured, but cooperation, attitudes, behavior can serve as signs of interior dispositions.

One must acknowledge the insights cited by Bissonnier and by Paulhus that many retarded children grasp religious significance intuitively. There are many instances that cannot be explained and many experiences and intuitions which cannot be measured. One cannot fathom the action of the Holy Spirit, the effects of the prayer of the catechists, of the students. The presence of Christ, where two or three are gathered in His Name can inspire a life of prayer in His special friends. Some responses were manifestations of this type of prayer: Dear Jesus, I want to thank You for all that You have given me. Please help the ones who didn't get so much. They need You more. I'm sorry for anything that I did that was wrong. Thank You for loving me so much. I want to love You more."

**Teachers' Observation:**

Observers noted that the children responded more readily to questions concerning the Gospel and Prayer than in the ordinary classroom sessions. They noted also the response in Music, activities, prayer and general enthusiasm as they returned to class. The children became more responsive to quiet prayer, quiet music and prayerful atmosphere. Prayers became "other centered" and included thanks and sorrow.

It was noted that these celebrations have many advantages for retarded children. Attention must be directed, however,
to the choice of the elements which compose it. Music, containing simple repetitive phrases and a simple melodic line, should be related to the theme and the desired response. The choice of Scripture passages requires an understanding of the child's capacity for comprehension. Consequently, the selections chosen should be meaningful to the child, adapted to his capacity and related to the theme. There should be as much correlation as possible between the scripture, music and prayer. The repetition of the same theme in so many ways is a valuable preparation and stimulus to prayer. The "keynote" is always the mystery of all mysteries: the mystery of Christ, which we celebrate and renew in celebrating and which represents the central theme of the entire liturgy. God speaks to man in diverse ways.

In the paraliturgy, children will meet Christ in several ways: in music, in scripture followed by reflection, in liturgy, in prayer in the presence of others. In whatever way He makes His presence felt to the child, that is the best way for him. Since the paraliturgies present so many avenues and so many reinforcements of the same theme it proved to the writer to be a valuable method of developing prayer.

Music

Many factors contribute to the success of a paraliturgy. Some children are influenced chiefly by the atmosphere, others

2op. cit., Hofinger, p. 35.
by reflective reading, some by activities, and many by music. The paraliturgies verify the value of music as a proper introduction to prayer. As the children entered the room, an instrumental selection, setting a calm, peaceful, joyous mood was used: Bach's Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring, Handel's Largo, Brandenburg Concerto, Greensleeves. Then a hymn or song related to the theme introduced the celebration. Sometimes new words were added to a familiar melody, as in the case of a selection from Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 and No. 9, Ode to Joy and Vanier's Pilgrim Hymn. (See Appendix D.) Besides setting the mood for the celebration, music was valuable as a reinforcing agent. Bissonnier states: "That song which can be chosen in relationship with the theme---will again present the idea in another fashion. We know the power of the air we hum and which continues to sing inside of us."³

Music provides likewise an emotional experience which is designated by Bissonnier as an essential element of religious education.

Foster stresses likewise the effects of listening to good music. "Because he actively participates in a musical experience, even if he is listening, he feels the music and it becomes thereby an emotional experience."⁴

³ *op. cit.*, Bissonnier, p. 89.

Guidelines for Teaching Prayer

A recent publication from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops included some valuable advice for teachers:

"The people of God have always been a praying people. Religious educators then, who are mature in the faith and faithful to this tradition will teach prayer."

Prayer is one of the aims of paraliturgies, and although the response and type of prayer may vary according to age and particular background, as indicated in this study, prayer is always present. "This teaching of prayer will take place through experiences of prayer. Through the example of prayer, and through the learning of common prayers." This is one of the requisites of a paraliturgy. "Religious education---given by a teacher who values prayer, will provide both the instruction and the experience."

Summary

Since the aim was to develop prayer, and since observation, discussion and analysis of tapes indicated that there was progress, the writer concluded that the use of paraliturgies is one effective means of developing prayer.

In this chapter, a method of conducting paraliturgies for retarded children was outlined. The lessons were discussed with the teachers and were evaluated by means of observation, discussion and analysis of tapes. The results indicated to the

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writer that paraliturgies are one means of developing prayer
growth in retarded children both in a residential setting
and in the C.C.D. program.

"Liturgy itself educates. It teaches, it forms community,
it forms the individual. It makes possible worship of God and
a social apostolate to man."6

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Problem

The purpose of the present study was to assess the feasibility of the paraliturgy as a means of prayer development in the life of retarded children at the pre-operational and concrete-operational stage of cognitive development. The results of the study, as manifested by the evaluations of observers and by the analysis of the tapes did indicate to the writer the validity of the use of paraliturgies. The specific aims of the study were:

1) to enable the students to relate prayer to a Scripture theme or to the theme for the day;

2) to develop a type of prayer which would include less egocentric forms of petitionary prayer: prayers of praise, thanks and sorrow.

To the question, "Do the results of the study indicate that the aims have been achieved?", the writer answers affirmatively.

Population

Three groups of children participated in this study. Groups A and B included students from St. Coletta School, Jefferson, Wisconsin, and comprised two classroom groups. The third group, Group C, consisted of students who resided at home.
while attending the weekly special religious education classes at Immaculate Heart of Mary School in Madison, Wisconsin. The groups consisted of: A, 12; B, 12; and C, 7 students. The mean CA of Group A was 10.5; of B, 14.3; and of C, 14. The mean MA of A was 5.2; of B, 6.7. The mean IQ of A was 48; of B, 49. No information was available to calculate the mean MA or IQ of Group C.

Interpretation of Data

Pilot work was conducted in a Basic Training Group where the mean CA was 8.8, the mean MA was 3.7 and the mean IQ was 38.9. Response indicated that the students were at the sensori-motor stage of cognitive development which requires a different type of assistance and stimulation for prayer. They lacked the power of association which would enable them to relate prayer to scripture. During their regular religion lessons, they are receiving lessons relative to developing the notion of gratitude to God for His gifts. This group was not used in the study.

A preliminary study was conducted with Group C in January and February, 1973, utilizing paraliturgies based on the lessons and Scriptural adaptation which were currently in use.

In Groups A and B, three introductory lessons were taught in order to assess the relative readiness of the children and to teach some of the music to be used in the celebration.

With a pre-test and post-test questionnaire, entry and exit behavior and attitudes were evaluated. Tapes indicated that the children had progressed in the use of other forms of prayer and in relating prayer to Scripture. From observation of group
performances, consultation with observers and analysis of tapes of pre-tests, celebrations and post-tests, one could detect a gradual progress, limited as it may be, in prayer development. Results showed that nine students in Group A and ten students in Group B showed favorable progress in relating prayer to Scripture and by including other forms of prayer. Of these, three pupils in Group B and two in Group A manifested greater development in prayer response than the others in their group. This could be due, in part, to a greater facility in oral language. One cannot overlook the possibility of the power of intuitive prayer, which as Bissonnier has maintained is a characteristic of retarded children.

On the contrary, two students in each group manifested little progress in verbal expression of prayer. One student in Group B expressed the same vocal prayer which she said on the first day of the study. A deeper experience of prayer which is silent and intangible, was made manifest only by a progressively prayerful attitude, behavior and reverence for prayer. Two students in Group A indicated by their questions and responses during the sharing session a greater capacity for reasoning, in comparison with the others in the two groups.

In Group C the results of the study were observed chiefly in the prayer response during the celebration and especially in the spontaneous prayers which were offered at the Mass which followed. Students displayed an interest and enthusiasm in bringing to the liturgy the products of their activity, as well as their response in prayer and participation.
The writer concludes that, when the theme, music, setting are controlled and paraliturgies kept in focus, the use of the paraliturgy is a teaching technique which can effectively promote growth in the prayer life of the retarded child.

Educational Implications

1. Educators of mentally retarded children stress the necessity of repetition, communication and integration in lessons. Due to the short attention span of the retarded child, concepts must be reinforced in as many avenues as possible. Paraliturgy does this by integrating Scripture, music, art, discussion, silent, spontaneous and group prayer. This type of religious education is recommended by the documents from the Vatican as well as by the pastoral directives from the bishops.

2. Paraliturgies may be used as a special celebration after a series of lessons or themes. The format used in this study was a compressed form used for the purpose of an evaluation, but it would not be feasible to use this format every day in a regular classroom situation. Group C, the CCD Group, had the advantage of having the lesson, precede the paraliturgy and the students come with their catechists to the special room for the celebration. Celebrations may be used likewise to celebrate special liturgical seasons, feasts and events in the student's life, as well as special themes in the religion lesson.

3. Children who have language difficulties and who have difficulty in responding in regular sessions can participate in some way, even if silently in the paraliturgy. Christ's
message can reach them in many ways without language.

4. Music, art, Scripture, discussion and all the elements which make up the paraliturgy must be adapted to the capacity and development of the child.

5. In the case of the students in the CCD program, it provides an opportunity for a communal celebration after the individualized instruction.

One of the dangers in using paraliturgies in teaching is to "over-teach"—to use the celebration exactly as a lesson. The aim is prayer and the teacher must be willing to wait patiently for prayer responses. One should not be afraid of periods of "positive silence." Perhaps the most fervent prayers are said during this time. Many people who are timid in verbalizing prayer in the presence of others, may be praying in a very fervent manner silently, in their own way. This may be particularly true of retarded children. It is necessary to prepare the way, the atmosphere, setting, scripture, music—all that will help prayer and then let God speak to the child. Listening is an important part of prayer. The writer felt that, on two occasions, with the CCD group, where the period was shorter, lack of sufficient response was due to "over-teaching," without allowing sufficient time for reflection, silence and prayer.

Suggestions for Further Study

A lack of research involving retarded children in paraliturgies presents many possibilities for further study. Some of the possible topics arising from the present study are:
1. A study of the same nature involving students who have been grouped presumably in different levels of prayer development. This might be ascertained by a suitable pre-test.

2. A study involving students at the sensory-motor, pre-operational, concrete-operational and formal operational level of cognitive development.

3. Research involving a set of questions which could serve as a prelude to the pre-test questions. These questions might resemble the questions employed in the language, association, decoding sections of the ITPA or similar tests. They could serve as a means of pinpointing the level of prayer development.

4. A study involving the use of Hurlock's classification in prayers of petition:

   1) prayers concerning the variety and abundance of this world's goods, for which the "children are encouraged to thank God;"
   2) direct petitions for special privileges;
   3) prayers for personal help to do the things that the child is unable to do for himself.

Thus a study analyzing the levels of petitionary prayer for:

   a) personal gifts;
   b) personal improvement physical, mental, spiritual;
   c) and prayers for the needs of others: friends, school, parish, church, community and world needs.

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(The children in the present study gave examples of all of these types of prayer.)

5. A series of paraliturgies to develop prayers of praise, thanks, sorrow.

6. A study involving the effects of language development on prayer.

7. Development of suitable music for paraliturgical celebrations.


9. A study involving the effectiveness of follow-up activities on prayer: art, music, drama, creative movement.


Summary

The study questioned the feasibility of a compressed series of paraliturgies adapted to the Lenten season in developing the prayer life of retarded children at the pre-operational and concrete-operational stage of cognitive development. Sufficient evidence was gathered to validate the appropriateness of these paraliturgies to the group studied. Other information provided by the post-test results and by analysis of the tapes suggest the need for sufficient spacing between the paraliturgies, in order to allow more time for reflective and communal prayer during the celebration. The teacher-investigator
entered the study hopeful that her proposed question could be answered affirmatively. Her expectations, no doubt, bear up on the positive results of the study. On the other hand, since every special religious educator desires to lead her children to prayer, she finds, in their prayer an expression of their growing spiritual maturity. It is, therefore, the joy of one special religious educator to conclude positively the validity of her study.

We must recognize the necessity of making room for mentally retarded children in the worship of the Church for "worship has been the basic way by which people have learned what it means to be a Christian."²

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Documents


**Articles and Periodicals**


APPENDIX A

PRE-TEST QUESTIONS

1. Introductory questions regarding name, preference of school, subjects, sports.
2. Do you like to talk to God? Do you like to pray?
3. When do you pray?
4. What do you say to God when you talk to Him?
5. Today is Ash Wednesday. We begin Lent today. What do you think of when I talk about Lent?
6. What can we do to show God we love Him?
7. What do you do to show love to others?
8. What do you think of when I say "sorry"?
9. What do you think of when I say "forgive"?
10. What do you think of when I say "I'll make up" with ___?
11. What do you think of when I say "thanks"?
12. When do you say thanks to others?
13. When do you say thanks to God?
14. What do you think of when I say "Baptism"?
15. What do you think of when I say "Easter"?
APPENDIX B

THEMES

2. God Wants Me to Talk to Him.
3. We Praise You, God Our Father.
4. Of My Hands I Give to You.
5. I Praise God With My Whole Body.
6. We Celebrate the Lord's Day.
7. God Wants Me to be Kind.
8. On Jesus' Team.
10. Signs Along the Road.
11. A Stop Along the Road.
12. Jesus Invites Another Friend to Follow.
14. Jesus, Teach Me to Forgive.
17. We Belong to God's Family.
Each para-liturgy consisted of the following program confined to one half-hour period:

1. Introductory music, played as the children entered the celebration room.
2. A song related to the theme.
3. Discussion of the poster indicating the theme of the day.
4. An adapted scripture reading followed by reflection and silent prayer.
5. A Sharing Event.
7. Activities suggested by the teacher to be conducted during the session or upon the return to classroom.
8. Closing Song.

Objectives: By means of a special para-liturgal presentation, the child shall, with help and motivation from the teacher, participate verbally, or through the use of gestures in group and in spontaneous prayer. A selected sequence of Lenten themes will help to stimulate growth in prayer.

Setting: A special room disassociated from the classroom will be designated for the sessions. A background of visuals, banners, pictures or murals depicting the theme for the day will vary according to the lesson. The Bible will be placed in a position of honor and a candle, symbolizing the presence of Christ, will be placed near it.

Suitable music, both instrumental and choral, correlated with the theme will be selected for each celebration. Music will be played as the students enter and leave the celebration room and the session itself will be introduced and closed with singing. At times singing will be naturally included within the theme itself.

Subdued lighting and a semicircular seating arrangement are suggested to facilitate an attitude of prayer.

Introduction: The introduction will include a song, a life situation, a story and often slides.

Scripture: The scripture should be related to the theme and adapted to the maturity and comprehension of the students. It is followed by reflection and silent prayer.

Response: Response will include group and spontaneous prayer, gestures, drama, art and/or music. A religious hymn will always serve as a closing for the celebrative lessons.
LESSON 1: JESUS IS MY FRIEND

Objective

The teacher shall endeavor to know the students, and to provide an atmosphere of trust, and prayer. She will prepare the students for the sessions to follow, by explaining the format and affording an opportunity for prayer. Following the presentation the students shall indicate verbally the signs of Jesus' presence in the room.

Introduction

As the children enter use the record (Getting to Know You). Review the song: I Love to Talk to God (Rev. W. Everett).

Discussion about friends. (When I came to St. Coletta School I was a stranger. Now I am happy to know so many friends.) Greet the children. Show slides indicating friendship. Have the students select the ones which show love and friendship, sharing of happy events and celebrations.

Jesus is our special Friend. He is always with us. He promised that when two or three people get together to talk to Him or about Him, He is right there with them. So He is here with us now. We have some signs that remind us that He is here. One is this candle. It lights up the whole room. Where would you like to put it? Another is this Bible. The Bible is God's Holy Book. Many of Jesus' Words are in the Bible. Jesus lives in us, too. He came to live in us when we were baptized. Let us stop for a minute and be very still. We will think about Jesus being here and talk to Him in our own words. Jesus wanted us to know His Father. He taught us how to talk to Him.

One day when Jesus' friends saw Him praying, they said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray." This is what Jesus said.

Scripture


Let us say together the prayer that Jesus taught us. Let us join our hands to show that we are friends and that we want Jesus to be our best Friend. We will make a circle around the Bible and candle to remind us that Jesus is right here with us.

Response

I shall say the first part and you will answer: "Jesus is my Friend."

A friend never stops caring for you and ... Jesus is my Friend. When I do something wrong and am sorry I know that .... Jesus is my Friend.
Even when people don't like me, I know that.... Jesus is my Friend.
When I make mistakes I remember that.... Jesus is my Friend.
A friend forgives me and.... Jesus is my Friend.
A friend loves me all the time and.... Jesus is my Friend.

Song: Lord, teach me to pray as I go on my way
For I want You to share everything that I do or I say
And I'll not be afraid, for I know You're with me
Lord, teach me to pray as I go on my way.
LESSON 2: GOD WANTS US TO TALK TO HIM

Objective

Following the Scripture reading, reflection and sharing, the student should express verbally a desire to talk to God.

Introduction

Review familiar song:

Lord, teach me to pray as I go on my way
For I want You to share everything that I do or I say,
And I'll not be afraid when I know You're with me,
Lord, teach me to pray as I go on my way.

Pause for a moment to remember that Christ is here with us. Discuss the meaning of celebration—a coming together to share joys, success, to show love and to give thanks. We celebrate birthdays, winning a game, a good report card, a happy day.

We celebrate with God, our Father, when we come with our friends to Mass. Sometimes we like to talk to a special friend all by ourselves. God is our very best Friend and He wants us to talk to Him about ourselves. He wants us to talk about all the people that we would like Him to help.

Scripture

Luke 11:1-4

One day, when Jesus was talking to His Father, His friends were watching Him. When He finished praying, one of His friends said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray." And Jesus said to him, "When you pray say 'Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil'."

Response

Song: Open My Heart to Your Word.
Let us ask Jesus to teach us how to pray. He told His friends the kind of things for which they should pray. He told them how to ask. He is here with us now. He promised that when people come together to pray, He would be with them. (Silent prayer.)

What can we say to God when we talk to Him. (Share spontaneous prayer.)

We can pray with our lips. We can pray with our hearts. We can pray with our bodies. We can pray with music—our work—our play.
Let us pray to God, our Father with the prayer that Jesus taught us. Let us raise our hands to praise God with our hands. We will offer Him all that we will do with our hands this week.

Our Father.

Concluding Song: Lord, Teach Me to Pray.
LESSON 3: WE PRAISE YOU, GOD, OUR FATHER

Objective

Following a presentation of slides showing beautiful scenes of mountains, rivers, lakes, sunsets, sunrises, trees, flowers, and plants, the child shall verbally express a prayer of praise.

Introduction

Introductory music: Handel's "Alleluia."
"Glory to God, Glory."

Discussion of times when people praise students: In class, in the choir, in games, swimming. How does it feel? When we tell people how good their work is, we praise them. When we look at all the wonderful gifts which God, our Father gave us, we should praise Him, too.

In chapel, at Mass, we hear many praise words: "glory, praise, bless, alleluia, Hosanna." We say: Glory be to the Father---, that's praise, too.

Scripture

Some phrases from psalms of praise, Psalm 8, 105, 106, adapted for children.

Now we shall look at some of the beautiful gifts which God has given us.

Show slides, with a soft music background, using a litany-type refrain "For the beautiful mountains, we praise you, God, our Father," or "Glory be to the Father."

Conclusion with the following song:

Glory to God, Glory
O praise Him, alleluia.
Glory to God, glory
O praise the name of the Lord.
LESSON 4: OF MY HANDS I GIVE TO YOU, O LORD

Objective

To instill in the children a generous response to Jesus' call to offer their hands to help others, to pray and to work. In response to the question, "How can you use your hands for God... and for others," the students will suggest by gesture or by words at least three suggestions.

Introduction

Introductory music: "He's Got the Whole World In His Hands." (Record) Sing: "Of My Hands I give to You, O Lord."

The students have been asked to bring in pictures showing the work of hands working, praying, caring, helping, greeting, and playing. These are to be arranged in a collage.

Pose questions concerning ways they have used their hands this morning. Suppose someone ties your hands behind your back when you wake up in the morning. What can you do by yourself? When would you need help? How would you get along in dressing, brushing teeth, combing hair, tying shoe laces?

I heard a story that shows how important hands can be. One day some boys went skating. The ice was starting to melt. They shouldn't go skating there, but they went. They were having a wonderful time at first. Then something awful happened! Yes, one of the boys fell in. Then the other boy tried to help him and he fell in, too. Then another boy saw an old rope along the shore. He crawled over, picked it up, and threw it to the boys. Then they made a chain with their hands--like this--and they pulled the boys out. They "lent their hands." When someone falls on the street, he might say "Lend me a hand." When people need help with work, they might say "Will you give me a hand with this?"

Jesus used His hands to help others. What are some of the things that Jesus did? How can we use our hands for work? for loving? for praying? for saying "hello" or "good-bye", "I'm glad to see you," or "I'm sorry?" Sometimes at Mass the priest holds his hands like this when he prays God, when he says "Glory to God," "Alleluia," "Hosanna," or when he says the prayer that Jesus taught us.

Scripture

Matthew 15:29-31; Mark 7:31. (adapted)

Think of all the people that Jesus helped with His hands. After their cures the people raised their hands...like this...to praise and thank God.
Response

Now we will raise our hands to praise God for giving us hands. We will thank Him for all the people who have helped. We will promise Jesus that we will use our hands to pray, ...to help...to work...to care for others.

Let the children trace the outline of their hands over the pictures in the collage. Then they will place it on the bulletin hand behind the Bible and candle as a gesture of offering, as they sing: "Of My Hands I Give to You, O Lord."
LESSON 51: I PRAISE GOD WITH MY WHOLE BODY

Objective

After a presentation establishing the need of the different members for each other, the child shall place a silhouette profile of hands, heart, and head on the bulletin board behind the Bible and candle.

Introduction

Review song:

All that I am, all that I do,
All that I'll ever have, I'll offer now to You.

All that I dream, all that I pray,
All that I'll ever make, I give to You today.

Reference to the lesson regarding "hands." We need our hands so much.

Remember what happens if we can't use them. But our hands need help from our heads and our hearts, too. We have to think about what we do. (Ask questions.) We must show love with our hands, too. So our hands need heads and hearts to help them. Our heads need our hands, too. Our hearts need our heads and our hands. They can't get along alone. We can't get along alone either. We need each other.

Jesus talked often about heads and hearts and hands.

Scripture

Choose the most suitable for the maturity and interest level of the group.

Head: Matthew 8:20; 27:29-30. (adapted)

Silent prayer, reflection, and spontaneous prayer.

Response

The children will offer a silhouette profile of hands, head, and heart which has been prepared before the celebration.

Repeat "All That I Am," or
"Of My Hands I Give to You, O Lord...; Of My Heart...; Of My Self..."
LESSON 6: WE CELEBRATE THE LORD'S DAY

Objective

The teacher shall present a positive approach to a lesson regarding the third commandment. After associating the celebration of Sunday with the celebration of Easter the child shall be motivated to express a prayer of praise and shall select two joyful words of praise used in the Mass.

Introduction

Song: "This is the Day Which the Lord Has Made."

Questions and discussions regarding the meaning of Sunday. What makes Sunday different from other days?

Sunday is our big day for celebrating in God's Family. That is the day that God Our Father gave Jesus new life. He wanted to make us happy.

Scripture

Here is a story about it. Luke 19 (adapted).
On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the disciples were hiding in a locked room. They were afraid of Jesus' enemies. All at once Jesus stood in front of them and said "Peace be to You".....

Response

Let us try to think about how the disciples felt. They thought that Jesus was dead. They thought that they would never see Him again. Let us talk to Jesus the way His friends did.

When we celebrate at Mass today, we celebrate with all God's family. Alleluia is a happy word that we hear often at Mass. Listen for it at the beginning of Mass. Let us listen, too, for the word "peace." It is another happy word.

We shall wear this Alleluia pennant to show that we are happy to celebrate with God's family.

Closing Song: "This is the Day That the Lord Has Made."
LESSON 7: GOD WANTS ME TO BE KIND

Objective

Following a presentation which links the theme of kindness with the positive interpretation of the fifth commandment, the child will share the activity of making a friendship chain and participate in a shared prayer response.

Introduction

Introductory Song: "Whatsoever You Do"

Discuss the kindness of Jesus to all the people He met. Jesus taught us how to love. He used His hands for others. (Questions) Jesus was kind to the poor, the sick, the lonely, little children, and even to the crowd on the hill. If we are Jesus' friends, we will try to love others. Sometimes we sing a song, "They Will Know We Are Christians." Let us sing one verse of that song now. Jesus said that we could show our love for Him by loving others.

Scripture

Matthew 22: 35-40

Reflection: Let us sing "Open My Heart to Your Word." Let us think about Jesus' words. (Silent Prayer followed by spontaneous prayer.)

Response

Join the strands of the friendship chain, and while extending it, move into a circular formation around the Christ candle. At the same time, sing the concluding song:

"They Will Know We Are Christians," Verse 2.

We will walk with each other
We will walk hand in hand...
LESSON 81: ON JESUS' TEAM

Objective

After an introductory discussion concerning invitations, teams and auditions for choirs, and the presentation of the scriptural version of the call of the apostles, the child shall express spontaneous prayer relative to the theme.

Introduction

A selection of instrumental music will be played as the children enter. They will sing as introductory song, "Lord, Jesus Lead Us."

Lord Jesus, lead us; Lord Jesus show us
How we can follow Your Way.
We want to love You; we want to follow.
Lord Jesus show us the way.

Discuss the game, "Follow the Leader." Did you ever play it? Take a few minutes to demonstrate. Leaders often choose teams. Discuss the choosing of teams for special games. How do you feel when you hear your name called? Discuss work to be done around the school. How do you feel when a very important person asks you to help?

When Jesus was getting ready to go along that special road to talk about His Father, He chose some very special people to help Him. Imagine how they felt when they heard their names called? The night before Jesus called them, He spent the whole night praying. He talked to His Father about it. This is how it happened.


Followed by reflection and silent prayer.
Jesus calls us, too. On the day that we were baptized, He gave us a very special call. (Recall the previous lesson.) When Jesus came down from the big hill, He began to call the names of His special friends. Then they stepped forward and stood beside Jesus. Let us think about that.

Response

Let us remember that Jesus is right here with us. He wants us to be His friends, too. He calls us. When I call your name, you may step forward and stand around the candle. This will be a sign that you want to be on Jesus' team. We will sing a song to our Leader...

"Lord Jesus Lead Us," or alternate song, "Follow Christ and Love the World as He Did."
LESSON 9: ON OUR WAY WITH JESUS

Objective

The teacher shall introduce the session by a discussion regarding trips, roads and plans, making use of illustrative material, pictures, charts and maps. After linking the introduction to the notion of our road to Easter and to Heaven, the child shall be influenced to ask Jesus to be His helper along the way.

Introduction

Sing: "Lord Teach Me to Pray As I Go On My Way."
Discuss the proximity of Easter travel, destination and the manner of arriving there. Sometimes in the summer the family plans a trip. What do you have to remember when you go on a long trip? Where? How long? Maps, guides, talking to someone who has been there? When you go along the road, what do you have to watch? (Signs, traffic rules, lights, speed limits, turns, detours...)

We are all on another kind of road. When God took us into His special family, the day that we were baptized, He started us on the road to Heaven, His Home. Since we belong to His special family, we will live in His home some day. But we have to stay on the right road to get there. We need a leader. We need someone that knows what Heaven is like. Who would be our best leader on the way to Heaven? Yes, Jesus will be our leader. Let us ask Him to understand all the things we need to know. We want to get there. During the next six weeks we will be on a shorter road. It is the road to Easter. If we travel this short road well, it will help us to get along better on the long road to Heaven.

Scripture:

Psalm 119, 101, 112.
Happy are those who walk in the way of the Lord!
Your Word, oh Lord, is a lamp to my feet, and a light on my path!

Psalm 121: The Lord is your Guide. He will look after you. He is beside you, at your right hand. The sun will not hurt you by day or the moon by night.

Response

Let us ask Jesus to be our Guide. Group Prayer first, followed by spontaneous prayer.

We have a picture of a road with an Easter Cross at the top. (Place a silhouette picture of Jesus on the road. Let the
students come to place their silhouette picture on the road behind the picture of Jesus.)

Concluding Song:

Lord, Jesus, lead us, Lord Jesus show us
How we can follow your way
We want to love You; We want to follow
Lord, Jesus show us the Way.
LESSON 10: SIGNS ALONG THE ROAD

Objective

To increase the child's awareness of what following Christ implies, and as a result of discussion, pictures, and music, the child shall be able to name two special signs along the road.

Introduction

Introductory song, sung by the children: "Whatsoever You Do."

Story involving traffic lights, signs, and traffic rules. Discuss the importance of laws to keep us safe. God has some special things to ask us. Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments...Which ones are the most important?" Someone asked Jesus that one day.

Scripture

Matthew 23: 34 (adapted).

"If you love Me, keep My commandments..." We know a song which tells us about God's laws, "Open My Heart to Your Word."* One day, one of the people who were trying to find something wrong with what Jesus said, said to Jesus, "Master which commandment is the most important?" Jesus said, "Love God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and all your mind. This is the most important. The second one is like this. Love others the way you would like them to love you. If you keep these laws, you will be keeping all My laws."

Response

Reflection followed by spontaneous prayer.
Sing: "God Is Love."
Let us put these two signs along our road. "Love God...Love others." Tell me some ways that you can love God. Tell me some of the ways that you can love others. Let us think of how we can love Jesus today. Remember that He said when we love others, we are loving Him.

Concluding song: "Whatsoever You Do."

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Open my heart to your Word
Teach me the joy of keeping your law.
LESSON 11: A STOP ALONG THE ROAD

Objective

After the presentation of the story of Zacchaeus, the child shall manifest his willingness to remain close to Jesus by placing his picture along the road.

Introduction

Introductory music: "Zacchaeus," Record by the Medical Mission Sisters. Song: "We Are Yours, O Lord, Our God, Alleluia."

Discussion of the preparations for a trip: plans, supplies, proposed schedule. What happens if plans are interrupted by traffic jams, detours, delays, interruptions? Discuss feelings when this happens. Tell a "life-situation" story. Something like that happened to Jesus one day. There was a "traffic jam" around Him. His trip was interrupted. Listen.

Scripture


Think about the story. Jesus is talking to us, too. Zacchaeus knew that the people didn't like him. He didn't care. He wanted to get close to Jesus. What did he do? What did Jesus say? How do you suppose that Zacchaeus felt when Jesus called his name? Jesus calls us to a special meal everyday. When does this happen?

Now we will listen to Jesus. He wants to talk to us. Perhaps there are some ways that we can do things that will help us get close to Him, too.

Response

Let us stand close to the Bible and candle. Remember that Jesus is here. He likes us to share our prayer with others. (Here the teacher provides a model for the first prayer.)

Invite the children to cut out a figure, place it on the poster close to the picture of Jesus.

Closing song: "We Are Yours, O Lord, Our God, Alleluia."

Play the record "Zacchaeus" as the children leave.
LESSON 12: JESUS INVITES ANOTHER FRIEND TO FOLLOW HIM

Objective

Through this presentation the teacher shall (through the flannel board illustration of the story of Zacchaeus) demonstrate the ensuing benefits of making a special effort to get close to Jesus. Following this, the child shall be able to select from a series of life-situations two instances where love implies the giving of oneself.

Introduction

Sing "Whatsoever You Do."

Discuss some parades, special celebrations for the astronauts, for the President, for heroes, and teams. How does the president travel in the parade? What does the president do when he wants to talk to his people? (Radio, T.V., telephone...)

When Jesus was living here, there was no T.V. or radio, or telephone. There were no cars, or trains, or planes. Jesus had to walk along the road and the people crowded around Him. The roads were very bumpy—not smooth like ours. The people wanted to get close to Jesus so that they could hear what He said. There were no loud-speakers either. There were always some sick people who wanted to get cured, blind, lame, deaf.... Jesus was always kind, no matter how many people crowded around Him. Jesus was kind to the little children. He let them come to Him.

Zacchaeus knew that Jesus was coming along that road. But he was small. The people didn't like him, so they didn't try to let him in to see Jesus. Do you know what he did? He ran ahead and climbed up in a tree. He really wanted to see Jesus! He didn't think that anyone would see him. All the people were watching Jesus. But Jesus saw him! Jesus always sees us when we do hard things for Him, even if no one else sees. Do you know what Jesus did? He called up to him, "Zacchaeus, come down. I want to go to your house today. I want to have lunch with you." Just imagine how Zacchaeus felt!

Scripture

This is how the story goes in God's Holy Book. Luke 19: 1-10 (adapted).

Response

Jesus calls us, too, many times during the day. When we get good ideas to pray, to be kind to others, it is Jesus calling you.
Listen to what Jesus says to you. He talks to us everyday. Jesus wants to come to our house, not just to the house where we live, but right into our hearts. He invites us to a special meal every day. What is this meal?

Silent prayer, followed by spontaneous prayer.

Play "Zacchaeus" from the record, Joy is Like the Rain.
LESSON 13: A MAN WHO WAS SORRY

Objective

To help the children become aware of the necessity of acknowledging what is wrong and of "making up." Provided with some examples, they shall select two examples of being sorry and two of "making up."

Introduction

This is a story of a little boy who was supposed to bring his little sister home from school. On the way home he was very mean to her. (Give names, details.) When he got home from school, his mother had a special treat for him for being good to his little sister. He began to think about what he had done to her. Imagine how he felt! What do you think he should do? Something like that happened to Zacchaeus one day.

Scripture


Some of the people who saw Zacchaeus going into his house with Jesus were very, very cross. They said, "Zacchaeus is not as good as we are! Why does Jesus go to his house?"

Zacchaeus was very happy to have Jesus come to visit him. He knew, too, that Jesus knew all about him. He knew that Jesus had forgiven him. Jesus asked to come to his house. Jesus gave him a sign that he forgave him. Then rightaway Zacchaeus said, "I'll make up for all the wrong I did. I'll make up four times as much. I'll give away half of everything I own." We should think about this story.

Response

When we hurt someone, what should we do? How? (Be sorry, make up for what we have done.) We should tell Jesus we are sorry, too. He said that whatever we do to someone else is just like doing it to Him. Just think about what we can do to make up.

Silent prayer. Make up a group prayer with a litany-type response:

For all the times we were mean....Jesus forgive us.
For all the times we were selfish...Jesus forgive us.
When others are mean to us....Jesus help us to forgive.
Objective

After discussion and comments regarding the call of Zacchaeus, and the reaction of Zacchaeus to the call, the students shall be motivated to realize the forgiveness of Jesus and shall express a prayer asking for forgiveness.

Introduction

(The concepts to be introduced in the story of Zacchaeus are extended over a period of five sessions in order to allow for more reflection and prayer.)

After Jesus told Zacchaeus that he wanted to visit him at his house, Zacchaeus began thinking. He said to himself, "Jesus knows all about me. He knows all about everything that I have done. He knows all the good things. He knows the bad things, too. Yet, He comes to my house. He must love me. He must have forgiven me for what I have done. I'll show Him that I am sorry and that I want to love more. He welcomed Jesus "joyfully." How do you think he did that? What did Zacchaeus say to Jesus to "make up"? 'Look, Lord, I am going to give half of my goods to the poor. Besides, if I have cheated anybody, I'll give them back four times as much.' Then Zacchaeus told Jesus that it was like saying, "I love You very much. Please forgive me."

Scripture


Response

Each one of us has to say this sometime, "Please forgive me. I was wrong." There are different ways of saying "Please forgive me." Sometimes people just shake hands, or smile, or say "I am sorry."

There are also different ways of saying "I forgive you." Jesus went to Zacchaeus and stayed for lunch. People say, "Forget it, we are friends!" or shake hands. Can you think of other ways of saying "I forgive you." When other people hurt us, we must be ready to forgive. Sometimes it's hard. Jesus will help us. He forgave everyone even those who were very mean to Him. He is our Leader.

When we say "Our Father," we ask God to forgive us the way we forgive others. Let us pray together to ask Jesus to help us.
When people hurt me... Jesus help me to forgive.
When people get angry with me... Jesus help me to forgive.
When someone hurts someone I love... Jesus help me to forgive.
When someone does something mean... Jesus help me to forgive.

(Alternate form)
For the times I did not love others... Jesus forgive me.
For the times I did not forgive... Jesus forgive me.
For the times I did not "make up"... Jesus forgive me.

What are some of the signs of forgiveness. (Smile, handshake, hug, kiss, kind work, playing without pouting, helping. It is sometimes hard, but that's what love means. Draw pictures of people forgiving, or select pictures which show forgiveness.

Sing:

(1)

Jesus help us to forgive, alleluia
Help us always to forgive, alleluia.

(2)

Even when it's very hard, alleluia
Jesus help us to forgive, alleluia.

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LESSON 15: TEN VERY SICK MEN

Objective

Following the sequence of the paraliturgy based on the concept of gratitude, the children shall express verbally a "thank you" prayer for at least three gifts from God.

Introduction

Music: Record (Medical Mission Sisters) using the selection "Ten Men Clean."

A story about two children who were given a surprise party and many gifts from their parents. The parents waited in another room to see their surprised and happy faces, as they opened their presents. They ran down the street with the gifts, without greeting their parents or saying thank you. Father and Mother had spent many hours working to pay for the presents. They wrapped them very carefully to give them a lovely surprise. How do you suppose they felt? Something like that happened to Jesus one day.

Scripture

Luke 17:11-20, adapted.

How do you suppose that Jesus felt when this happened? What do you think about the ten men?

We shall think quietly about this story and see if we always say thank you to people who do things for us. Do we say thank you to God every day for all the things which He has given us?

Tell me some of the things for which we should thank God. We shall thank Him quietly first and then we shall share with others all the things that God has given us.

Response

Private prayer, followed by spontaneous prayer. Conclusion with the following song:

O God, You gave us the things we have today
Please help us remember to thank you when we pray
Thank You for daytime, for the rain and snow
For sunshine and moonlight and all the things that grow.
Objective

After a musical introduction, the instructor will introduce the session by telling a story similar to the Bible story and through Scripture reading, reflection, and prayer the child shall be motivated to express a prayer of sorrow and trust in God's forgiveness.

Introduction

(Tell a modern family story summarized similar to the theme of the prodigal son.) Jesus told a story like that one day. It was about a farmer and his son.

Scripture


A farmer had two sons who helped him on his farm. The father was a very kind father. He loved his sons very much. One day one of the sons said, "I'm tired of working around here...I want to go out and have some fun with the other boys. Give me some money and let me go." The father was very sad... He was afraid that his son would go out and get in with the wrong crowd. The boy kept pestering his father. So his father let his son go. As soon as the boy got his money, he went off--far, far away. At first he had a good time as long as his money lasted. He had many good friends, too, because they knew that he had money. He could give them a good time. Then one day when he started checking his money, he found that it was nearly all gone. He was really poor!

What do you suppose he did then? He didn't want to admit that he had made a mistake so he tried to get work. No luck! He thought, "Maybe my friends will help me." But now that his money was all gone, his friends seemed to disappear. (Continue the story using the flannel board, inviting the students to move the figures.) How do you suppose the boy walked back to his father? How do you suppose the father walked to meet his son? How do you think the boy felt?

Jesus told that story to show how much God, our Father loves us. He wants us to know that God our Father is always ready to forgive us when we are sorry.

Response

Sometimes we are like the boy in the story. Let's think about it. Maybe we treat others---parents, teachers, and friends---the way the boy treated his father. We should tell God that we are sorry.
Group response by means of a litany-type prayer:
For the times we didn't listen...Father forgive us.
For the times we didn't do what we were told...Father forgive us.
For the times we were selfish...Father forgive us.

God Our Father will forgive us, like the man in the story, when we say we are sorry. Let us say together the prayer that we say at Mass. "Jesus, have mercy." "Mercy" is another word which shows that God forgives.

Concluding song: Jesus forgive us, Jesus forgive us,
As we forgive one another.
LESSON 17: WE BELONG TO GOD'S FAMILY

Objective

Following a presentation utilizing pictures, story, and music, the child shall experience a greater awareness of his membership in God's family, and shall manifest it by expressing a prayer of thanks to God for adopting him.

Introduction

Introductory music: "Spirit of God" (Medical Mission Sisters)
"God Lives in Me, For I've Been Baptized," sung by all as a review song.

The teacher tells a story about a child who had no father or mother. The child was left alone, sad and lonely. He felt that he didn't belong anywhere! Then one day a very kind man and woman came to see him. They talked to him for a long time. He liked them very much. (Show pictures.) Then they asked him if he would like to belong to their family. How do you suppose he felt?

Discuss questions regarding the love of the new parents, joy of the little boy. Show pictures of the new home. Discussion held on the joy of finding a new family.

This is what happens at Baptism. (Show pictures of the priest meeting the family at the door, the procession into the Church, Baptism, and acceptance by the community. Discuss briefly the importance of a new name in God's family, the feeling of being taken into a group for sports, games, and prayer, and the importance of "belonging.") We belong to the "Christian family." Show slides of pictures of a Baptism Ceremony.

Scripture

This is God's word to us: Isaiah 43:1, 4 (adapted).
"Do not be afraid for you belong to Me.
I have called you by your name, you are Mine.
...You are very precious to Me and I love you."

Response

Ask children to reflect as you say: "God is saying this to me. Let us thank Him." Group responses of thanks, led by the teacher. Now we will speak to God silently.

Let us share our prayer now with others. (Spontaneous prayer.)

When you were baptized, God took you into his special family.
I will call you by the name He gave you and you may answer.
You can do this by coming up when I call your name. You became a "Christian" in Baptism. Our family name is Christian. (Adapt this to the children's capacity.) As each child is called, he may answer "Here I am" or "Alleluia," or any response you suggest.

Closing song: "We Belong to You, O God, We Belong to You."
Lesson 18: Jesus Gives Us New Life

Objective

Motivated by the use of concrete material and following a presentation which manifests the qualities of water as life-giving, the student shall express his gratitude for Baptism in a spontaneous prayer.

Introduction

Have in the background pictures of beautiful scenery, showing the beauty of lakes, rivers and waterfalls. In another section of the room place pictures of a Baptism ceremony and of the symbols of Baptism. On a special stand place the picture of the Glorified Christ (Canadian Catechism Series). On a table place a bouquet of flowers, a glass bowl, filled with fresh clear water, a plant, a fish bowl and a stone.

As the children enter, play the record "Spirit of God in the Clear Running Water."

The introductory song is "God Lives In Me."

Play a record which utilizes the sound of waves beating against the shore. Ask the children to identify the sound. Show a few slides portraying waterfalls, water scenes, and various uses of water.

Discuss the seed which had been planted previously. When you saw the seeds you were going to throw them away. You said that they were dead. Look at them now. What has happened? We see green sprouts. There is new life. Look at this plant. What would happen if I did not water it? Giving it water is showing that I care for it. I want it to live. Look at the fish. How can they live in that little bowl? What would happen if I did not give them fresh water? I care for the fish.

If I give you a drink of fresh cold water on a hot day, it's like saying "I care for you. I want you to live."

Look at this bowl of fresh cold sparkling water. (Hold it up to the light.) Look at these beautiful scenes. The water makes our country so beautiful.

Water helps us in many ways. (Questions)

Jesus is our very best friend. He gave us a sign of His friendship when we were baptized. The priest used water. Water is a sign of New life, care, love, power, freshness—Jesus gives us new life. He is our friend. He cares for us. Water is mentioned many times in the Bible. (For Teacher References see the Easter vigil Ceremony for the Blessing of the Baptismal Water.)
Scripture

Jesus called Himself the "Living Water." Why? (John 7:38)

Jesus said, "I have come so that you may have life. (John 10:10)

Let us think about Jesus' words. (Litany type response of gratitude for Baptism and for Jesus' friendship, followed by spontaneous prayer.

To remind us that Jesus cares for us, we will have a drink of fresh, cold water. It will remind us of our Baptism. We will join hands and sing "New Life!"

New Life! New Life! New Life!
God our Father gives us new life.
And our hearts are singing,
Glory, Glory, Alleluia.
Children of the Lord.
LESSON 19: JESUS, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Objective

Following a presentation which will allow the children to experience and recall the effects of light after darkness, the children will make a replica of a Baptismal candle and will participate in a spontaneous prayer of gratitude for Baptism.

Introduction

The children enter a completely darkened room. There will be no introductory music. After the children find their places, discuss the disadvantages of darkness. What would happen if we had no light at all? The Bible tells us that, at the beginning of the world, darkness 'covered the face of the earth.' How do we get light? (Sun, moon, electricity.) Before God made the sun, there was no light. It was darker than this. If there were no sun, it would be black, black, black. Then one day God said "Let there be light," and He gave us the sun for the day and the moon for the night. One day Jesus said, "I am the Light of the World." He said that anyone who followed Him would walk in the light. (John 35, 36, 46) Here, light the candle.

Scripture

John 35, 36, 46 (adapted).

On the day that you were baptized, the priest gave you a lighted candle. You were too small to hold it then. Someone held it for you. The priest told you to "let it shine" Jesus shares His life with us. He is here with us now. Let us thank Him for the life He shared with us. Yesterday we said that water gives life. The candle is a sign of life, too. Jesus wants us to share our light with others. Light means joy and happiness. Jesus wants us to spread joy and happiness around us. How can we do this? (Questions, discussions) Make a selection from pictures or slides. Now we will light our candle from the big candle and spread the light around. Let us ask Jesus to help us to let our light shine, to make others happy. The teacher says the first prayer and invites the students to participate.

Response

As a reminder of their Baptism, the children will make a replica of a Baptismal candle and decorate it with the symbols of Baptism.

As a conclusion, the students will sing: "This Little Light of Mine."
LESSON 20: NOW THAT I HAVE GROWN, I CAN ANSWER GOD MYSELF

Objective

After a short introductory discussion concerning growth and the promises made for him at Baptism, the child shall be stimulated to answer God in his own way, be gesture and prayer response.

Introduction

As the children answer, the record "New Life" will be played and the children will join in the singing.

Discuss what it means to be friends (playing together, sharing, loving, helping, forgiving). Discuss how one feels when someone asks to be a friend. God always loved us. Remember the song "God is Love?" Let's sing it. On the day we were baptized, He asked to be our friend. He asked if He could be ours. The people in the Church were there to welcome us into God's family. (Show pictures or slides.)

Scripture

Listen to what God says to us.
"I have loved you with an everlasting love...a love that will never end. My love will never leave you." (Isaiah 54:8, 10, adapted.)

Response

Reflection followed by silent prayer.

On the day that you were baptized, someone answered all the questions for you. You were not old enough to answer for yourself. Others made some promises for you. Now you are grown and can answer for yourself.

I will ask the questions and you will be able to answer. (Use the formula for renewal of Baptismal promises from the Easter Vigil ceremony, but adapt it to the maturity of the students.)

We will celebrate our Baptism. We will use the special stoles which we prepared. We will light our candles from Jesus' candle. After the students renew their promises, a teacher will place the special stole on their shoulder. The stole has the child's name on one end of the stole and the name "Christian" on the other.

(On their return to class, the students will decorate their stoles with Symbols of Baptism.)

The children standing, wearing their stoles, and with lighted candles in their hands, they sing:
APPENDIX D

Music Used In The Study

Beethoven, L. (Music) "O God, You Gave Us the Things We Have Today; Lyrics, We Sing and Praise, Book 2, adapted. (Toronto: Ginn and Company)


Everett, W. L. "I Love to Talk to God," Songtime for Special Ones. (Madison, Wisconsin: Association for Retarded Children, Inc.)

Folk Melody, "He's Got the Whole World In His Hands," Making Music Your Own (Morristown, N. J.: Silver Burdett Co.).


Rogers and Hammerstein, "Getting to Know You," The Sound of Music (Argyle Enterprises, Inc.).

Scholtes, Peter, "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love," Missa Bossa Nova (Chicago: F.E.L. Publications).


