

Friendship and Forgiveness Prayer Space

Prepare the prayer space with a grouping of pillows or beanbag chairs around a central table. On the table, place a candle (either real or flameless) and *The Catholic Children's Bible*. Have the Bible open to page 1492, "Jesus Teaches Us to Forgive." Children may also bring their Bibles, if that is convenient. Otherwise, read aloud the Featured Story and the Understand It! and Live It! sections (page 1493). For the Parent-Child Retreat, one or more parents may be chosen to read the Featured Story and the Understand It! and Live It! sections.

Materials Needed

- a sheet of drawing paper for each child
- crayons or markers

Opening and Reading

Light the candle, and begin with the following words:

- Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.
- Let us begin our prayer today with the Sign of the Cross. In the name of the Father. . . . Amen.
- Today's reading is about forgiveness. We know that God forgives us when we are sorry. So we need to forgive others if they hurt us. This is what Jesus said about forgiving others:

Read the title of the Featured Story and the story itself. (For the Parent-Child Retreat, you may want to choose a parent to read.)

Discussion

These remarks and questions are based on Understand It! on page 1493. You may choose to have it read aloud, or immediately proceed with the following comments based on the reading:

- Let's think about our friends and family members for a moment. We love our friends and family, and they care about us too. But sometimes people we love hurt us. Maybe they say something mean or boss us around or stop playing with us for one reason or another. What can we do when that happens? (*Solicit answers like, "We can talk things over," "We can ask why they are being mean," etc.*)
- Usually things get better when we talk things over. But we might still be left with a little hurt. Then what do we do? (*Accept reasonable responses.*) What does Jesus say we should do when someone hurts us? (*Jesus says to forgive.*) How many times should we forgive? (*not just once or twice, not even seven times, but seventy times seven!*)



- Jesus is using the number seven to make an important point. Some people say seven is a lucky number. In Jesus' time, it was a special number. It meant "perfect." So when Jesus tells Peter to forgive even more than seven times—seventy times seven!—he is telling him to forgive perfectly and even more!
- Jesus says we should forgive every time someone asks for our forgiveness. Even if it is over and over again. But—and this might be even harder—we should forgive even if someone doesn't ask for forgiveness and doesn't say "I'm sorry." This is how we show we are true children of God the Father: by forgiving as much as he does.

Make the point that this does not mean we must put up with being hurt by someone, whether that is a friend, a child, a family member, or an adult. Forgiving someone does not mean that we think that what that person did is okay. Remind the children to tell someone trustworthy if they are being hurt or frightened by someone else.

Craft Session

Make a forgiveness card, following the directions in Live It! on page 1493. For the Parent-Child Retreat, a parent might be chosen to read Live It! aloud. You might ask the children to spread out on the floor, or provide a table and chairs.

Closing Prayer

At the end of the session, ask the children to take their cards home and use them when they need to ask forgiveness of someone. Gather the children in a circle. Ask them to put their cards down in front of them and be still for a moment.

- Jesus taught us a special prayer, and part of the prayer asks God to forgive us just the same way we forgive others. Let's pray that prayer now. We call it the Our Father.
- Let's start with the Sign of the Cross. In the name of the Father . . . Amen. Our Father . . . but deliver us from evil. Amen.
- Go in peace, ready to forgive as God forgives you!

