

# Broken Pots

## A Lesson in Piecing Together a History

### OVERVIEW

The young people will piece together a broken pot to simulate their faith story. Each piece represents a particular aspect of their history: family, parish, prayer, youth camp, and so forth. This is a good activity for sacramental preparation classes, retreats, or sessions on religious heritage and tradition.

### Suggested Time

About 30 minutes

### Group Size

This strategy works best with groups of twenty or fewer.

### Materials Needed

- ☼ clay pots, one for each person
- ☼ plastic zipper bags, one for each person
- ☼ permanent markers, one for each person
- ☼ tacky glue, pottery glue, or duct tape
- ☼ a pillar candle and matches, a colorful cloth, a cross, and other items for a prayer space
- ☼ a tape or CD player, and a recording of reflective music (optional)

**PROCEDURE**

*Preparation.* Purchase an inexpensive clay pot for each person. Break each pot into several pieces, keeping in mind that the pot must be reassembled. Remove three or four pieces and set them aside. Put the remaining pieces in a plastic zipper bag. Make one bag for each person.

You may want to break a pot for yourself and put it back together to show as an example.


1. Introduce this activity by reminding the young people that each of us brings a lifetime of experiences to this time and place. We each have a story to tell about the people and experiences that brought us to this point in our faith journey.

2. Give each young person a bag with the pieces of a pot and a permanent marker. Comment that by the end of our life we will be whole pots, but right now, we are putting all the pieces together. Each piece represents one part of our faith journey. Tell them to write on the outside of each piece the experiences or people that have been important in their own journey. For example, they might write "grandmother" on one piece, "Camp Victory when I was ten" on another, "family traditions," "Sunday Mass," "the beach in the morning," or any number of other things that have contributed significantly to getting them to this point. Allow 5 to 10 minutes for this part of the exercise.

3. Make available pottery glue, tacky glue, or duct tape. Tell them to put their pot back together. If they are using duct tape, tell them to cut the pieces small so that they do not cover up their writing or to put the tape on the inside of the pot.

While they are putting their pots back together, set up a prayer space with a candle, a colored cloth, and other decorative items. Also include in the space the pieces of clay that you set aside. If you have reflective music available, set up the tape or CD player.

4. When everyone has done the best job they can of putting their pot back together, gather the teens around the prayer space. By now they all will have discovered that several pieces are missing. Point out the extra pieces in the prayer space. Reiterate the remarks you made at the beginning of the session:

 By the end of our life we will be whole pots, but right now we are putting all the pieces together. Because we are still on the journey, some pieces have yet to be uncovered.

Ask the young people the following questions:

What will you need in the future to build your relationship with God?

What experiences and people do you anticipate coming into your life that will reveal more of God to you?

In answering the first question, they might say things like more prayer or a stronger desire to know God. Their responses to the second question might be lifelong friendships, a marriage partner, deep sadness, or joy.

Close the discussion by commenting that every day of the rest of our life will bring opportunities to build our relationship with God. And if we take those opportunities, we move closer to adding another piece of the pot, another step toward completeness.

5. Light the candle. Invite the young people to a moment of silence, then read the following adaptation of Sir. 33:13:

Like clay in the hands of the potter, to be molded according to the potter's wishes, so are human beings in the hands of their Maker, to be given whatever the Maker knows is right.

Invite the young people one by one to bring their pot to the prayer space and lay it around the candle. As they do so, say these words from the Book of Isaiah: "God, you are the potter, we are the clay." Everyone should respond "We are the work of your hands" (adapted from Isa. 64:8).

Close with a group recitation of the traditional prayer known as the Glory Be.

## ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

- ☉ If you cannot purchase clay pots for everyone, an alternative might be to use large disposable cups and cut them up, or appropriate pictures from magazines. The cup or picture, like the pot, represents a person. Again, leave several pieces out.
- ☉ If your group is small, ask the teens to bring their markers to the prayer space. Distribute the leftover pieces of pots. Have the young people write their answers to the two questions on the pieces. Place them around the candle during the closing prayer.
- ☉ If you have a large group, have three or four people bring their pots to the central prayer space at the same time. Pause in between each group to re-establish the mood of reverence.

Use the space below to jot notes and reminders for the next time you use this strategy.

