

Easter:

Sixth Sunday of Easter

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Preparation

Background for Scripture Readings

First Reading

- In the first reading, it is evident that the early Church found it hard to accept that God's plan for salvation was not limited to the Jews.
- The vision in Peter's dream prepares him for his meeting with Cornelius, a Gentile.
- Peter baptizes Cornelius and his household, and he declares that God is not partial but loves all people.

Second Reading

- The reading from 1 John is part of a series of statements that end with the crucial reminder that love comes from God.
- The author wants to point out how much God loves us.
- God demonstrated the extent of his love by sending his Son to give his life for us.

Gospel

- Today's Gospel continues the theme of love with the message that God has loved us, so therefore we must love one another.
- Love demands all we are, to the point of giving up life for the sake of another.
- God is the source and object of our love.

Breaking Open the Word

Leader Instruction

Catechist Reflection Guide for the Sixth Sunday of Easter

First Reading: Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48—The conversion of Cornelius' household.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4—All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of God.

Second Reading: 1 John 4:7-10—Love one another.

Gospel: John 15:9-17—I call you friends.

Invitation to prayer (30 seconds)

Ask the children to quiet themselves and sit comfortably. Have them take three deep breaths while you prompt them to relax as they breathe in God, our Father who loves us, Jesus Christ, his Son, our brother, and God's Holy Spirit who lovingly guides us. As an invitation to prayer, make the Sign of the Cross.

Listening for a word or phrase to speak to your heart (3-4 minutes)

Read the Gospel passage or the special phrase slowly and deliberately while the children are silently listening. Ask them to listen for a word or phrase that seems to be God's word for them today. Spend about 30 seconds as they select their "word" from God. Ask them to silently repeat that word or phrase and to write it on their heart.

Ages 5-8: Read the phrase on their sheet and say a few words about how we know we are loved. Then read aloud 1 John 4:7.

Ages 9-14: Read aloud 1 John 4:7-10.

Loving God through his Word (3-5 minutes)

Ages 5-6: Use the picture that illustrates the hand sign for "I love you" and teach the sign language hand sign to the children. Use these questions as a conversation starter about love. Have you ever made hand signs for words? Can you make this sign for I love you? Who are some of the people you love? Who are some people who love you? Who will you use this hand sign with to say I love you? Close with the prayer.

Ages 7-8: Tell children that Jesus' message to you is that he loves you very much. As God loves you, he hopes you will love others. Use the picture that illustrates the hand sign for "I love you" and discuss various ways to express love. Tell them that **the hand sign and the picture message above are two ways to say I love you.** Then ask: **What are some other ways to say I love you? How about a hug, or a kiss, or a card on special occasions?** Help children make a list of people they love. Discuss ways of showing love. Close with the prayer.

Ages 9-11: Guide them through a meditation on the reading using the questions on the handout. Invite reflection and discussion on outreach beyond friends and family. Close with the prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Ages 12-14: Guide young people's meditation by using the questions on the handout. Follow the meditation by asking young people to share their responses. Have them quietly decide who they will do loving actions for this week. Close with the prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Living the Gospel words through the week (3-5 minutes)

The handouts describe one or two ways children and young people can live this reflection on the Gospel through the week at home, school, or play. If appropriate, have them add one or two more personal choices to act on this week.