

"Lord, when did we see you hungry?"

Matthew 25:37

The theme for this year's Catechetical Sunday is, "Lord, when did we see you hungry?" These words are from the judgment scene in Matthew 25, which is unique to his Gospel. Only here in all of the Gospels does Jesus ascribe to himself the status of a king rendering judgment. The criteria of that judgment are most striking: They are the simple acts of love and kindness directed to the "least of these" of this world. To have done these everyday works of goodness is to have touched Jesus himself; to have neglected to do them is to have neglected the needs of Christ.

PREPARATION

- In preparation for the prayer, set the family prayer table with a green cloth (for Ordinary Time), a Bible open to Matthew 25, and a candle and matches.
- In preparation for the activity following the closing prayer, place small slips of paper, pencils or pens, and a small basket or jar on the table.

INTRODUCTION

- Gather the family around the prayer table. Light the candle, and invite all to quiet themselves for prayer. Explain that today, September 15, is Catechetical Sunday. It is the day when we bless and pray for all who teach us how to follow Jesus' call to serve the universal mission of the Church.
- Invite family members to spend a minute silently thinking about people who, through their words and actions, have taught us to serve Jesus by helping other people.



- Sing together a favorite hymn, and pray together the Sign of the Cross.
- Lead the following prayer:

Dear Jesus, you teach us to serve you by helping other people when they need it. You tell us that by following this teaching, we will experience peace now and forever. Thank you for those who teach us about you. Help us to serve those in need and share your love through our words and actions. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

- Invite a family member to proclaim Matthew 25:34-40.

- Invite family members to share what they think is the meaning of the story. Then tell family members that this passage is the basis for the Corporal Works of Mercy.
- Ask family members to repeat the six Corporal Works of Mercy, as stated in the Gospel, after you. (*I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; [I was] a stranger and you welcomed me; [I was] naked and you clothed me; [I was] ill and you cared for me; [I was] in prison and you visited me.*)
- Help family members understand that this passage is a call to missionary discipleship. Explain that Jesus knows his followers by their works of mercy and love, and those works include feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, and so forth.
- Invite family members to share aloud the names of people who have taught them, through word and example, to follow Jesus by serving the needs of others. Tell them that the following is a prayer of thanksgiving for these catechists who taught us to be missionary disciples.

PRAYER

Pray the prayer below together, ending with the Hail Mary and Sign of the Cross.

***Jesus, Savior and Lord,
you challenge us to spread the
Gospel by sharing God's mercy
and love with others—feeding
the hungry, clothing the naked,
and caring for the sick.***

***You have given us great examples
to follow in the saints, missionaries,
and catechists of your Church.
Thank you for the teachers,
catechists, friends, and family
members who have taught us
how to follow you by word and
example. Help us live as missionary
disciples, witnessing to you and your
unending love through our words
and actions. Amen.***

WITH YOUR FAMILY

- After the prayer, review with family members ways that you have done or could do the Corporal Works of Mercy as a family. For example, recall times you have donated food and drink to the hungry and thirsty. Perhaps you donated food and water to a food pantry, or served a meal at a homeless shelter. Identify ways you clothed the naked. Perhaps you cleaned out your closets and donated unworn and unused items to a local shelter; or you bought gloves, socks, hats, and new coats for the homeless.
- Based on your discussion, identify opportunities to perform one or more Works of Mercy in the coming week. Make a family commitment and plan to follow through on your ideas.