

Thanksgiving Prayer Service

MATERIALS

- Colored paper leaf for each child
- Large mural-style tree (trunk and bare limbs only) displayed in the prayer service gathering space
- Adhesive (for students as they affix leaves to tree)

PREPARATION

In the front of the gathering space, display an image of a tree with a trunk and bare branches. You might want to paint the tree on mural paper. Ensure that the tree will have ample branches to accommodate a paper leaf for every participating child, or design multiple trees. Pre-cut a leaf shape from autumn-colored paper for each participating child. Consider designating a single color for each class or grade. Or, as a variation, have classes prepare their leaves in advance and bring for use in the prayer service.

OPENING PRAYER

LEADER: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Lord, we know that all good things come from you. Thank you for the wonderful lives you have blessed us with. Help us to pray with grateful hearts as we gather here today. We ask this through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

READING

READER: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke. “As he continued his journey to Jerusalem, [Jesus] traveled through Samaria and Galilee. As he was entering a village, ten lepers met (him). They stood at a distance from him and raised their voice, saying, ‘Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!’ And when he saw them, he said, ‘Go show yourselves to the priests.’ As they were going they were cleansed. And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus said in reply, ‘Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?’ Then he said to him, ‘Stand up and go; your faith has saved you.’ (Luke 17:11-19)
The Gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

REFLECTION

At this time, distribute the colored paper leaves (if individual classes have not yet already prepared leaves in advance). Invite catechists to assist younger children with the activity.

LEADER: “On the leaf that you’re being given write or draw: one person in your life that you are grateful for; one possession in your life that you are grateful for; and one opportunity in your life that you are grateful for. (For example: *My mom; my home, the opportunity to go to school or play soccer with my friends*) Then, write a prayer on the leaf thanking God for these blessing in your life.”

When students have finished, invite them process up by grade to the front to hang their leaves on the bare tree. Be sure to have tape or other adhesive ready for children to use to adhere their leaves to the tree. Instruct them by saying:

LEADER: “Now, as a community we will reflect on all the many blessings we have to be grateful for. Let’s silently pray in gratitude with our brothers and sisters. Please come forward when your grade is called and hang your leaf on the tree.”

Kindergarten...

Grade 1...

Grade 2...

Grade 3...

etc.

Consider playing an appropriate reflection song while this takes place. (Example, “Here I Am To Worship.”)

CLOSING PRAYER

LEADER: Lord, look at the many gifts you have given to us. Help us to be people who willingly share those things with others out of thankfulness to you. Lets close in prayer together.

ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth as
it is in heaven.

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.
Amen.