

LENTEN STEWARDSHIP TEACHING SERIES - 3

Third Sunday in Lent - Gospel: John 2:13-22

Fruits of Abundance - Children's Activity

OBJECTIVE: Students will identify the gift of their own bodies as sacred gifts given to them from God. Students will examine their own eating habits and learn how a diet abundant in fruit and vegetables helps them to be good stewards of their own gift of health.

LEVELS: Pre-K through Grade 6.

CONCEPTS: Recognizing that one of the gifts we have received from God while we are on earth is our bodies, students will begin to appreciate that being good stewards includes taking care of themselves. Even as children, humans tend to develop bad eating habits, either from excessive eating or poor food choices, and their bodies can suffer from poor nutrition as a result. As students realize that even destructive eating practices can impair our relationship to Christ, they can begin to take on new ways of thinking and eating in order to be better followers of Jesus. Lent is a special time that Christians often give up or take on something in their lives, including changes in eating habits, that will bring them closer to God during this annual following of Jesus' journey to the cross and the Easter resurrection.

SKILLS: Discussing, Identifying Attributes and Components, Organizing Information, Problem Solving.

MATERIALS: Copy of food pyramid for each child to take home (attached) and print 2 copies of the fruit cards on card stock and cut them to make 30 squares. *Optional: Fruit snacks.*

TIME CONSIDERATIONS:

Preparation: 15 minutes

Activity: 30-45 minutes

ASSESSMENT:

Students will respond to the following questions:

What does it mean to me for Jesus to want us to have life and to have it to the fullest?

What is the difference for you between excess and abundance?

What are some good eating practices that will help you be good stewards of your health?

BACKGROUND (*Parallel with Adult Teaching Series*)

Jesus knows that corrupt worship always leads to impaired relationship with God and sacred space is specifically set aside to come close to God. Jesus wants us to have life and to have it to the fullest, but sometimes abundance leads to excess. Even in our own churches, some corporate and private practices can lead to making God's place less holy. Jesus admonishes all of us that destruction comes before rebuilding - e.g. you want a new bedroom in your house: you have to destroy the old one to get the new one. Certainly this message was true about Jesus' own death, as mentioned in the passage, but it is also true for all of us when our abundance leads to excess and we are no longer good stewards of God's house and God's gifts to us in our own bodies and talents.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

OPENING JOKE:

What fruit should be necessary for every meal?

A TOMATO, because it can be considered a fruit or a vegeTABLE!!

INTRODUCTION:

For Jesus, his Father's house, the temple, was a sacred place where the Jews could come to be closer to God and to worship God. This is similar to the way we feel about our church. When we go into the main sanctuary, we are expected to behave in a certain way, to be quiet, meditative, and ready to meet God in song, prayer, and in the Eucharist. Certainly we would be upset if we came to church and there were people outside the doors being loud, selling things, and carrying on business at all hours of the day and night! Jesus literally "turned the tables" on the people acting in ways that were showing disrespect for God's house, cleansing the temple of their dishonest activity. In the same we must also consider our own bodies and good health as sacred gifts from God and not practice poor eating habits – even if it means completely changing some of our food choices!

GOSPEL READING: *John 2:13-22 (NIV)* **Jesus and the Money-Changers**

13 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' ¹⁸The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' ¹⁹Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' ²⁰The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' ²¹But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²²After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

DISCUSSION:

1. Have students say why their bodies and health are gifts from God.
2. Make a list on the board of ways they take good care of themselves that respect these gifts.
3. Ask for ways our culture talks about taking care of things that keep us strong and healthy.
4. Compare and contrast what our culture says brings about good health and what the Gospel says about being good stewards and respecting these gifts?
5. Ask students for some ways they could be good stewards of their health? (*Dress right, eat more fruits and vegetables, eat less sugar, get enough sleep, wash their hands, exercise, and GIVE THANKS.*)
6. Hand out food pyramids and ask how many children actually eat enough fruit and vegetables each day. Ask them to suggest ways they could talk with their parents about adding more fruits and vegetables to their diets during Lent.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITY – ABUNDANT FRUIT LOTTO

1. Sit children around table so that the fruit cards are easily accessible to all.
2. Shuffle the 30 fruit cards and arrange them FACE DOWN in a 6 x 5 array on the table.

3. Start by turning any 2 over. If they match and show the same fruit, name the fruit, and remove the cards. If the 2 cards do not match, return them face down, to their original spots in the array.
4. Have the child next to you repeat step 3; then repeat with each child in turn, going around the group.
5. Allow only 2 cards to be turned over each turn – EVEN IF THE 2 CARDS MATCH.
6. Continue play until there are no cards remaining face down on the table.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Gather the children with their take home food pyramid posters.

Close by praying:

Dear Lord, during this season of Lent we are following your travels to the cross. Today we remember that your life was not the easy or appealing way. But through your life and death on the cross, you gave us the fruit of greatest abundance -- life everlasting. Help us to recognize the many fruits we receive in our lives from following the lessons we learn about you; help us always to appreciate and be good stewards, to take care of these gifts that we receive from you. AMEN.

Because nutrition is something all people should be concerned about, good stewardship of our bodies includes a diet abundant in fruits and vegetables. According to the 2005 dietary guidelines by the USDA, our daily intake of food should include:

- 2 cups of fruits – choose from fresh, frozen, canned or dried; limit amount of fruit juices

- 2 ½ cups of vegetables – eat more dark-green vegetables like broccoli and orange vegetables like carrots and sweet potatoes, also eat dry beans and peas



