

Cycle A

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Lectionary #638

Reading I: Numbers 21: 4b-9

The events related in this Scripture portion dramatize one of the moments of vacillation that frequently characterized the Israelites, especially during their years they spent wandering in the desert. Though they have been delivered from slavery in Egypt through the manifestations of God's power and protection, years of wandering in the desert have wearied the people and eroded their faith. So once again they complained against Moses and God, resulting in the wrath of God, manifested in the form of poisonous snakes sent among the camp. Recalcitrant, the people come to their senses and plead for God's mercy. Yet again, God extends His mercy and **loving** presence to the Israelites.

Reading 2: Philippians 2: 6-11

This passage from Saint Paul to the Philippians is one of the earliest hymns that give praise to Jesus Christ for his **love** made manifest on the cross. This text is also heard on Palm Sunday as the Church enters into Holy Week, the week that celebrates the **love** of Christ Jesus. It traces the trajectory of Christ's eternal existence from before the Incarnation, when he enjoyed equality with God, through his Incarnation when he willingly surrendered that status to become human in all things but sin and accepted death on a cross, to his exaltation by God through the resurrection. All of these things are evidence of God's **love** made manifest through Jesus.

Gospel: John 3: 13-17

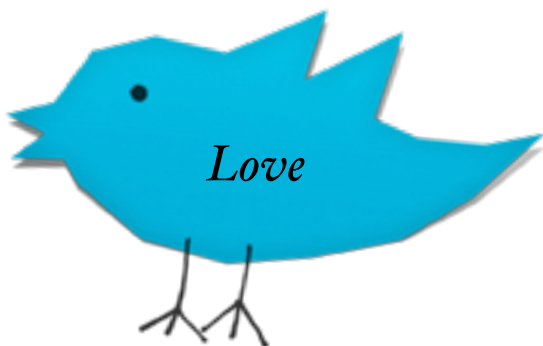
The final part of the exchange between Jesus and Nicodemus focuses on the divine motive for the Incarnation: extravagant **love**. God did not become human for the purpose of judgement and condemnation, although we can condemn ourselves by refusing the gift of ultimate **love** offered by God. God sent His Son for only one reason: *that the world might be saved through him.*



build. plant. grow.
the word this week



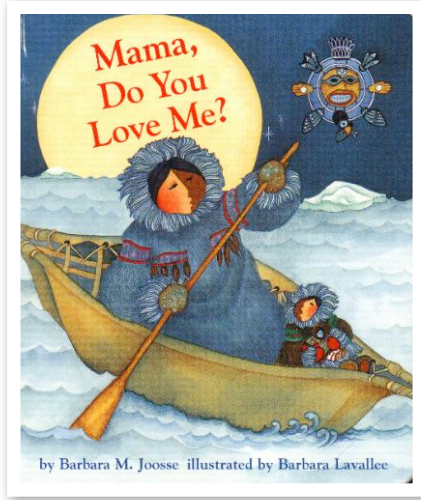
ordinary
time



lectionary
reading



children's
story



Mama, Do You Love Me?

Written by Barbara M. Joesse
Illustrated by Barbara Lavallee
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character
education
activity

One of the definitions of love is in verb form.... "to seek and foster the good of another person knowing that there will be a personal sacrifice"

Mama, Do You Love Me?

The answer comes...*Yes, I do Dear One.* This is a universal story about parental **love** extended to a child that wishes to constantly push the envelope to see if there are limits to her mother's **love**. The story is captivating because of its unusual Arctic setting. The lyrical text introduces readers to a distinctively different culture, while at the same time showing that the special **love** that exists between parent and child transcends all boundaries of time and place. The artwork is beautifully rendered and speaks to the warmth of **love** itself. The story helps children understand that God's **love** is unconditional.

Activity

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for the students to practice **gratitude** by making a "Thank You" card. The recipient of their Thank You card can be their parents or God as a loving parent.

Step One: Emphasize that the story teaches that parents and God will always love them. That does not mean that they love some of the things they do or say, but beyond that, the love that parents and God have for them is unquenchable.

Step Two: Provide each student with a large piece of paper and drawing and art materials that are available. Have the students write and illustrate a "Thank You" card for their parents or God to show their appreciation.

Here are some suggestions:

- *Thank you for loving me, even when I
- *Thank you for making me feel safe when.....
- *Thank you for forgiving me when I

Step Three:

If the "Thank You" Card is made for a parent, they should be placed in an envelope and mailed to the home, providing an element of surprise for both the parent and the child upon its arrival.

If the "Thank You" Card is to God, display them on the Prayer Table in the Classroom or have the students bring them to mass and place them before the altar during the Offertory. (Make sure the presider knows what is happening).

A covenant is an agreement between God and His people that binds one to another and the binding force in this covenant is LOVE.



case study

**Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.**

What could you do today?

Make it a practice to keep a small notebook by your bedside. As you do your night time prayers, make it a practice to make some notes in the notebook. Divide the page in two columns and list in one column all the things that you are thankful for and all that had happened that day that showed you God's **love**. In the other column make a list of all the things you might have done better that day, especially thinking about some of the things you might have said, thought or done that might not have been as **loving** as they could have been.

Look Feel Know Act

It is always a really good practice to reflect on all the events of the day and the interactions we have had with various people. In the tradition of one religious order, the Society of Jesus, this end of the day reflection is what is known as the EXAMEN. The purpose of the Examen is to see how God and God's **love** has been made known to you throughout the day and to acknowledge that there were words, actions, attitudes and thoughts that might not have been as **loving** as they could have been. Lastly, the examen calls you to make a resolve to seek some changes to improve yourself in **loving** ways.

In the book, *Mama Do You Love Me* we encounter a young girl who pushes every possible limit with her mother to see if her mom's love is truly unending. The story presents a wonderful parallel for the unconditional love that is constantly extended to every human being by God. One of the absolute truths that clearly comes through in the book is also a truth for our relationship with God. This truth is that the words we use, the thoughts we have and the actions we might enter into may not always be pleasing to God, but God does love us in spite of the unloving things we might do.



**closing
tool**

Pray that you will always remember that God's love is always available to you. Pray that when you see a cross, it will remind you of the deep and abiding love that God has for you. Make a conscious choice to say "God, I know you love me" each and every time you see a cross. Amen.



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