From the Editor

This edition of Good News for Catechists looks at understanding Scripture, particularly the richness of Luke’s Gospel, as we journey through Year C of the liturgical cycle. You will find some very helpful background reading on Luke, as well as a number of practical suggestions for bringing his gospel stories to life in the classroom.

There is also an article examining the content of Pope Benedict’s recent encyclical, Caritas in Veritate. The Q and A style of the article may help you in gaining a lay-person’s grasp of what is a very dense publication.

During this Easter season, may you be blessed with the peace of Christ.

Catechists’ Formation and Support Services

We are here to help you.

Kaye Clancy – responsible for the deaneries of the Southern Region.

Sharon Freeman – responsible for the deaneries of the Eastern Region, as well as the deaneries of Western Plains and Sunshine.

This Team provides a comprehensive professional development program for catechists, parents and parish faith development personnel throughout the year. Members of the team are also available, when needed, to provide assistance to catechists in parish or deanery groups. Phone: 9267 0228

Tricia Murray – Tricia’s role at the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) is now Education Officer: Prayer and Liturgy. She remains responsible for the deaneries of the Northern Region, Westgate, Central West and Geelong.
The Gospel of Luke, like all biblical texts, is a theological document written to assist readers not only to deepen and strengthen their faith but also to help them to live according to the Good News. While the four Gospels, especially the synoptic Gospels, have strong similarities they are also quite different, especially in the materials included and the manner in which the evangelists shape their stories. Luke includes in his Gospel a number of parables and stories which are unique to him and which therefore provide us with a unique picture of God. Among these are the parable of the Good Samaritan (10: 31–42) and the lost and found stories (ch. 15).

The Man Who Fell Among Thieves

We are all familiar with the story of the man who was assaulted and robbed while travelling down from Jerusalem to Jericho and who was helped by a passing Samaritan. Traditionally we talk about him as the ‘good’ Samaritan. In order to more fully understand the message Jesus intended we need to do a little background research.

In Jesus’ time Jewish and Samaritan relations were uneasy to say the least. The region of Samaria was between Galilee and Judea. Galileans wishing to visit the Temple in Jerusalem had to pass through Samaria unless they took a long detour along the opposite side of the Jordan. The parents of the child Jesus had to make this choice each year when they travelled to Jerusalem. Samaritans and Jews had a common ancestry but they were quite different in their practice: for example, the Jews worshipped in Jerusalem and the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim. They regarded each other as foreigners. Even Jesus refers to Samaritans as foreigners in the story of ten lepers (Lk 17: 11–19).

Jesus told this story to answer the lawyer’s question ‘And who is my neighbour?’ (Lk 10: 29). This story really begins at verse 25 when a lawyer, a man skilled in the Law of Moses, asks Jesus what he must do to gain eternal life. In reply Jesus asks him what the Law says and the man replies, ‘You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself’. Jesus acknowledges the aptness of this reply but the lawyer asks, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ At first glance it seems that Jesus ignores the question for he launches into a story. The parable he tells draws in his listeners, involving them in the drama of the story. His audience, unlike us, would not be surprised to hear that the priest and the Levite see the injured man and pass on, because men of this class were exempt from such work. When the third man arrives, sees and acts to assist the wounded man, Jesus’ audience would be identifying with him until they hear the shocking words, ‘He was a Samaritan’. This was totally unexpected. Reading between the lines one can almost hear the gasp of horror from the crowd who, empathising with the assaulted man, wonder how they could possibly accept help (salvation) from an enemy. No doubt a great hubbub ensues until Jesus returns to the earlier question and asks which of the three is neighbour. One can imagine the crowd falling silent so that they can hear the response, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Up to this point the lawyer
and the crowd are flabbergasted. But they are about to be shocked even further for Jesus says, ‘Go and do likewise.’ This conclusion contains the whole point of the story for Luke: Not only has the definition of neighbour been widened but the model for imitation is now enemies who overcome natural and inherited prejudices to assist those in need.

The picture of God that Jesus wants to draw for us is a God whose love is universal, inclusive and whose love is mediated through the most unlikely people. This, then, is how one gains eternal life: not just by regarding all people as neighbour, but by being prepared to accept God in them regardless of religion, nationality, ethnicity, belief or morality. Who in my street, my family, my neighbourhood reveals God to me?

Lost and Found Stories

Chapter 15 of Luke is devoted to three lost and found stories. They are set in the context of the scribes’ and Pharisees’ complaint that Jesus welcomed and ate with sinners. Typically, Jesus addresses this complaint by telling stories.

The Lost Sheep

The first involves the shepherd with one hundred sheep (15: 3–7). Jesus begins his tale by inviting the Pharisee and scribes to participate in it: ‘Which one of you ... ?’ and then gives the scenario of leaving the ninety-nine in the wilderness in order to search for the missing one. The sensible course of action would be to ensure the safety of the ninety-nine before beginning the search. The action Jesus describes is extravagant and theatrical. So, too, is the shepherd’s exuberant return, triumphantly carrying the sheep on his shoulders and joyously calling upon friends and neighbours to rejoice because he has found the sheep that was lost. If a film or television drama had a similar storyline we would assess it as unrealistic and incredible. Parables usually confront us with an exaggeration or an implausibility on which the point of the parable hangs. The shepherd’s extraordinary behaviour in seeking the lost one and in celebrating its return illustrates God’s excessive love and boundless joy over the one sinner who repents.

The Lost Coin

The second story (15: 8–10) about the woman who loses one of her ten coins begins in a similar fashion and drives home a similar message, ‘Or what woman ... ?’ The effort the woman puts into finding such an insignificant item seems out of proportion. Her joy on finding the coin and her call to her friends and neighbours to rejoice with her are also ‘over the top’. A sensible person would
write off the loss. A sensible woman would rein in her exuberance. But the God Jesus wants us to know is not sensible according to our human reasoning. Rather, God loves excessively and boundlessly and rejoices blissfully when a sinner repents.

THE MAN WHO HAD TWO SONS

The third story (Lk 15: 11–32) is that of the man who had two sons. Traditionally we have called this the story of the prodigal son or the lost son but this title omits the older son. Sometimes it is called the story of the prodigal father and thereby gives emphasis to the action of the father.

This is a more elaborate story than the previous two, giving much more detail yet following their basic outline. Unlike the other two it does not begin with a question; instead it appeals to men and their sons. The younger son requests his inheritance, leaves on his travels, lives wastefully and eventually finds employment looking after pigs (11–16). The desperation and indignity of this situation lead the son to reflect on what he has lost and he resolves to return and ask his father for a servant’s job.

The story now moves to the home-coming scene in which two remarkable events happen. Firstly, Jesus gives the impression that the father is waiting and watching for his son. When the son comes into sight, the father, ‘full of compassion’, runs to his son, embraces and kisses him. The father’s behaviour is totally unexpected, and opposite to how a dignified elder ought to act. Secondly, the father does not allow the son to complete his rehearsed speech. Rather, he instructs the servants not only to reclothe him as an important member of the family, but also to prepare a celebratory feast. The father displays extravagant, over-the-top love and forgiveness of his son who ‘was dead and is alive again ... was lost and is found’.

Unlike the first two ‘lost’ stories this one does not finish with the call to celebrate. The older brother, on returning from his work in the fields, hears the celebratory music and dancing. Once he knows the reason for this, he angrily refuses to go in. Once again the father throws dignity to the wind, and goes out to his son to plead with him. Patiently he listens to his grievances and reassures him, ‘Son, you are always with me and all that is mine is yours’. But he continues with his refrain that celebration was necessary because his brother ‘was dead and has come to life ... was lost and has been found’. It is on this note that the story ends. However, this ending is also the beginning, for it prompts us to continually reflect upon God, who is as generous and as understanding of human weakness as the father in the story. And it calls us to imitate God’s love.

Jesus told these stories in response to the grumbling of Pharisees and scribes. They defend not only Jesus’ practice of welcoming and eating with sinners and tax-collectors but also the right of the disliked and ostracised to hear and listen to him. In the process they reveal God as all-loving, all-tolerant and all-embracing of individual imperfection.

Reference:

Kaye Clancy
It is doubtful whether we could use the Gospel of Luke with all its rich stories, sayings and parables to construct a specific picture of the Christian community that he was addressing, but the narrative does give us some clues. The primary audience of Luke’s Gospel would probably have been a group of late first-century churches made up of very diverse groups of people. They would have had very different socio-economic, and social backgrounds. There were Jews and Gentiles, women and men, poor and quite wealthy people. There might even have been people of the elite or of the retainer class who had important positions with the elite. When reading Luke’s Gospel it is important to keep all of this in mind and then we can better understand the different forms that he used when writing.

The communities of Luke had seen Christianity shift its centre from Jerusalem, the religious capital of Judaism, to Antioch further north. They were also urban communities who were living and developing in Hellenistic cities. Their experience, therefore, was with the city, temples, theatres, market places, arenas, wealthy homes and crowded hovels. Their world was full of soldiers, mariners, administrators, tax collectors and visitors using the sea routes and Roman roads which joined the cities to each other. The approaching end of time had now slipped into the past and they were caught up in the history of here and now. When reading Luke/Acts we can see that the communities were concerned by problems from within and persecutions from without. We can tell that there were problems from within because Luke deals so much with table fellowship, wealth, sharing of goods, reconciliation and the exercise of leadership. The Lukan communities had a missionary character, as they were born of a mission to Antioch and continued with missions from Antioch.

Luke opens his Gospel with a prologue (Lk 1: 1–4) which explains to the reader that he is following in the tradition of others who have given accounts of what was happening among the Christians. The Jewish historian, Josephus, wrote an apologetic work, Against Apion, which, like the Gospel and Acts, is addressed to a distinguished person and picks up this theme again in a second volume. Josephus uses his own history, Antiquities of the Jews, which is based on the sacred book of the Jews, as a reference to earlier writings. He tells his readers that he is correcting the ignorance of others and to instruct anyone else who wants to know the truth about the antiquity of his race. One can see Luke’s preface is very similar to this...
model – he is defending Christianity against false accusations and false testimonies that may be circulating at the time.

Theophilus, to whom Luke dedicates his Gospel, does not seem to be an outsider but someone known to the writer and has already been instructed in Christian matters. By saying this to Theophilus (whom he calls ‘most excellent’) he is assuring his readers that what is now being preached goes back to the preaching of Jesus and the earliest disciples. Although the Preface seems simple, his message to Theophilus is as complex as the situation he is addressing. The challenge is for us, the audience today, ‘to uncover its simplicity without destroying its complexity’.

Fr Eugene LaVerdiere tells us that Luke’s intention seems to be pastoral, and the form of the Gospel is narrative – historical in conceptual design and theological in inspiration. It seems to be speaking of old things in new ways. For the truth of the old to be clear, the circumstances of the audience meant it had to be reinterpreted for their purposes.

Luke seems to have chosen to write a narrative but as this was familiar to his communities, it is not surprising. Narrative is to literature what story-telling is to the spoken word. The writer must allow the reader to enter the story and to discover it for themselves. Luke does this with great polish and some of his individual episodes fill the imagination and quicken the spirit. Take, for instance, the Emmaus account (Lk 24: 13–35), which is a literary gem. The setting is very clearly presented, the characters are sharply drawn and the way they deal with one another is very dramatic. There is no need for a long and heavy discourse; the reader is drawn into the story by short exchanges, a saying here and there and a brief discourse.

The narrator in Luke’s stories always knows more than the characters in the story, with the exception of Jesus, the risen Lord. As a participant in the story the reader knows how a situation which may be a problem to the characters is actually resolved. When the two disciples in the Emmaus story do not know the person who is walking with them, we know it is actually Jesus (Lk 24: 15, 16). By using dramatic irony the reader continues to follow the story to its joyous resolution. By using a vocabulary that would be associated with what they themselves were doing in their homes (Lk 24: 30), the narrator is letting his readers know that the disciples’ story is also their story.
This is also a work of Christian history, a new literary genre, where the writer approached the Gospel from a historical point of view and history from a gospel point of view. This is not history as we would understand it. It does not even follow strict chronological sequence, and although he stayed quite close to the order established by Mark and others, Luke did not hesitate to transform any events and put them into new places so as to bring out their historical significance.

One of the major concerns of the time was, ‘could Christians be good citizens of the Roman Empire?’ Luke wants to show that Jesus taught an ethic that was quite compatible with good citizenship of the Empire. There are various times in the narrative that we realise this. In the story of the centurion, Jesus affirms the faith of the centurion and cures the centurion’s servant (Luke 7: 1–10). As Jesus died another centurion glorified God and said that Jesus was surely innocent (Lk 23: 47), an innocence already recognised by both Pilate and Herod (Lk 23: 13–15).

By telling his story, Luke unveils for his readers the meaning of various life contexts which had become a problem for them. He showed them how to see, understand and respond like so many in his account, beginning with the shepherds (Lk 2: 2). The Gospel addressed those Lukan communities so long ago and helped them to form a new Christian identity as much as it helps us in our Christian journey today.

Geraldine Martin

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**Caritas in Veritate Q&A**

**What is Caritas in Veritate?**

It is the third encyclical letter of Pope Benedict XVI. An encyclical is a letter sent to all the bishops of the Church but Pope Benedict directs this letter also to priests and deacons, men and women religious, the lay faithful and all people of good will. Its title is Latin for *Charity in Truth*.

**What is it about?**

It is an addition to the social teaching of the Church and it concerns mainly the Pope’s vision of integral human development in charity and truth. *Caritas in Veritate* is ‘a call to see the relationship between human and environmental ecologies and to link charity and truth in the pursuit of justice, the common good, and authentic human development. In doing so, the Pope points out the responsibilities and limitations of government and the private market, challenges traditional ideologies of right and left, and calls all men and women to think and act anew’ (US Conf. of Cath Bishops).

**Where did the Pope get the idea for the encyclical from?**

The letter distils the Pope’s careful thought over a lifetime on the social
teaching of the Church. He took three years to write it and he was inspired by a quote from St Paul’s letter to the Ephesians: ‘living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ’. Pope Benedict reverses the words in this quotation from ‘truth in love’ to ‘love in truth’. He thinks that ‘love in truth is the driving force behind the authentic development’ of each human being individually and of humanity as a whole. The letter also builds upon Pope Paul VI’s Populorum Progressio, to which Pope Benedict refers as ‘the cornerstone of the Church’s social teaching’.

**WHAT ARE THE TWO CRITERIA OF HUMAN SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR THAT THE POPE SAYS ARE CRUCIAL FOR HUMAN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT?**

The Pope says justice and the common good are fundamental. He calls justice an integral aspect of love to which we are all called. ‘To love someone is to desire that person’s good and to take effective steps to secure it.’ Love for others means working for the good not just of one or two but for everyone’s benefit: hence for the common good.

**WHAT ARE AMONG THE CHIEF ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY POPE BENEDICT?**

1. That ‘while the world’s wealth is growing in absolute terms, inequalities are on the increase. In rich countries, new sectors of society are succumbing to poverty and new forms of poverty are emerging. In poorer areas some groups enjoy a sort of ‘super development’ of a wasteful and consumerist kind, which forms an unacceptable contrast with the ongoing situations of dehumanizing deprivation’ (22).

2. That uncertainty over working conditions caused by mobility and deregulation, when it becomes endemic, tends to create new forms of psychological instability, giving rise to difficulty in forging coherent life-plans, including that of marriage. This leads to situations of human decline, to say nothing of the waste of social resources.

3. That the so-called outsourcing of production can weaken the company’s sense of responsibility towards the stakeholders — namely the workers, the suppliers, the consumers, the natural environment and broader society — in favour of the shareholders (40).

4. That due attention must be given to responsible procreation, which among other things has a positive contribution to make to integral human development. The Church, in her concern for authentic development, urges full respect for human values in the exercise of sexuality (44). Morally responsible openness to life represents a rich social and economic resource. The decline in births, falling at times beneath the so-called ‘replacement level’, also puts a strain on social welfare systems, increases their cost, eats into savings and hence the financial resources needed for investment, reduces the availability of qualified labourers, and narrows the ‘brain pool’ upon which nations can draw for their needs. Furthermore, smaller and at times
minuscule families run the risk of impoverishing social relations, and failing to ensure effective forms of solidarity. These situations are symptomatic of scant confidence in the future and of moral weariness.

5. That the environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole (48). [Hence] there is a pressing moral need for renewed solidarity, especially in relationships between developing countries and those that are highly industrialised. The technologically advanced societies can and must lower their domestic energy consumption, either through an evolution in manufacturing methods or through greater ecological sensitivity among their citizens (49).

6. That the decisive issue is the overall moral tenor of society. If there is a lack of respect for the right to life and to a natural death, if human conception, gestation and birth are made artificial, if human embryos are sacrificed to research, the conscience of society ends up losing the concept of human ecology and, along with it, that of environmental ecology. The book of nature is one and indivisible: it takes in not only the environment but also life, sexuality, marriage, the family, social relations – in a word, integral human development (51).

7. That in the face of unrelenting growth of global interdependence, there is a strongly felt need, even in the midst of a global recession, for a reform of the United Nations Organisation, and likewise of economic institutions and international finance, so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth.

In commending his encyclical to the Church last year, Pope Benedict concluded, ‘Pray, brothers and sisters, that this Encyclical may help humankind to feel itself to be a single family, committed to creating a world of justice and peace. Pray that believers, who work in the fields of the economy and politics, may feel how important their coherent Gospel witness is in the service they perform for society. In particular, I ask you to pray for the heads of State and government of the G8 who are currently meeting in L’Aquila, Italy. May this important world summit generate decisions and directives that serve the true progress of all peoples, especially the poorest’.

Cath Place
Luke states that the purpose of his Gospel is that Theophilus (and us) ‘may know the truth concerning the things about which [he] has been instructed’ (Lk 1: 4). The truth is that Jesus came to reveal to humankind the munificence of God’s love for them. Everything Jesus said and did is revelatory of God. One of our roles as catechists is to help students to come to know Jesus through the stories of the Gospel. One filter we can use is to examine what happens when Jesus meets people. Three examples of Jesus meeting people in Luke’s Gospel are:

1. the call of Peter, James and John (Lk 5: 1–12)
2. the healing of ten lepers (17: 11–19)
3. the encounter between Zacchaeus and Jesus (Lk 19: 1–10).

**JESUS MEETS SIMON, JAMES AND JOHN (Lk 5: 1–12)**

Luke paints a vivid picture of the crowd pressing in upon Jesus as he stands by the lake of Gennesaret speaking ‘the word of God’. Jesus meets the people where they are and they respond to this encounter by straining to hear his message. Jesus is aware of the crowd’s desire to hear and the danger that the opportunity might be missed if he is forced to abandon his position. Luke tells us that Jesus solves the problem by stepping into Simon’s boat and asking him to ‘put out a little way’. At first sight this action of Jesus seems presumptuous but when we realise that Jesus already knew Simon, for he had healed Simon’s mother-in-law after leaving the synagogue (4: 38–39), it makes sense. Jesus then uses Simon’s boat as his platform, sitting down and teaching the crowds. The encounter between the crowd and Jesus engenders interest in and indeed thirst for the word of God.

This encounter continues into the next scene with Jesus turning his attention to Simon, telling him to ‘put out into the deep water’ and to put down his nets. Simon, despite having worked in vain through the night, puts down his nets, which are then so abundantly filled with fish that they begin to break. The meeting then expands to include James and John for, as Simon’s partners, they come to help. Simon’s amazement leads him to recognise Jesus as something more than a healer so he begs him to go away for he is sinful. Jesus tells him not to be afraid and proclaims that, henceforth, Simon, James and John will be catching people. When they reach the shore they leave everything (including the magnificent catch of fish) and follow him. The encounter between Simon, James and John results in three new recruits to assist Jesus’ ministry. What do we learn about Jesus in this story? What kind of person is he?

**SOME BACKGROUND ACTIVITIES**

- Using a map of Palestine in Jesus’ time, have students find the Sea of Galilee. Ask them to research the
names for this body of water, e.g. ‘Lake of Gennesaret’ (Lk 5: 1), ‘Sea of Tiberias’ (Jn 6: 1), ‘the sea’ (Jn 6: 16–25; Lk 5: 2; 8: 22–33), ‘Sea of Galilee’ (Mt 4: 18; 15: 29; Mk 1: 16; 7: 31).

• Find a picture of the so-called ‘Jesus boat’, which was found about 20 years ago when the waters of the Sea of Galilee receded. How many people could work on such a boat? How many fish could it hold before it began to sink?

**SOME ACTIVITIES FOR WORKING WITH THE TEXT**

• Invite older students to read Mark 1: 16–20 and to compare it with Luke 5: 1–11. Ask them to record the similarities and differences. Ask them what each story tells us about Jesus?

• Where is Andrew in Luke’s story? Have older students read Lk 5: 5–10 and ask them to note the references to ‘they’, ‘their’, ‘nets’, and make suggestions as who ‘they’ were. Remember there is no definitive answer in the text!

**JESUS MEETS TEN LEPERS (Lk 17: 11–19)**

The meeting between Jesus and the ten lepers takes place as Jesus travels to Jerusalem through the region between Samaria and Galilee. This meeting is difficult to fully understand without a little background knowledge.

- Leprosy was a skin disease which was not the same as modern leprosy (Hansen’s disease). Lepers were excluded from society until they recovered and underwent purification rites.

- Samaritans and Jews regarded each other as ‘foreigners’, even though they had a common lineage and similar beliefs.

There is an element of distance in this meeting. The lepers keep their distance while calling out to Jesus, ‘Have mercy on us’. We might expect to hear Jesus replying that of course he has mercy on them. However, Jesus maintains his distance telling them to show themselves to the priests. Yet the effect of this rather remote encounter is such that each of the ten obeys and leaves Jesus. As they go they discover that they have been made clean. One of them returns praising God. The encounter is now close and intimate, for the man prostrates himself at Jesus’ feet. He is now a believer. Jesus marvels that a Samaritan, a foreigner, is the only one who truly recognises what has happened. The meeting ends with Jesus sending the Samaritan on his way, for his faith has made him well.

This meeting shows us that Jesus works in stages with people; that he meets with them where they are and waits until they are ready to meet him at a deeper level.

**SOME ACTIVITIES FOR WORKING WITH THE TEXT**

• Imagine you are one of the nine and have just discovered that your leprosy has disappeared. What might you do and say? What would you tell others about Jesus?

• Imagine you are the Samaritan who returned to Jesus. What would you tell the reporter from The Jerusalem Herald about your meeting with Jesus?

• Write a song of thanks to a familiar tune, such as Three Blind Mice.

• Make a list of words describing Jesus in this story.
The meeting between Zacchaeus and Jesus appeals to any of us who like to see celebrities pass by. Those of us who are shorter than others have a certain sympathy with Zacchaeus, who took advantage of the nearby sycamore tree.

Spectators crowded along the sides of the road as Jesus passed through Jericho. Luke introduces Zacchaeus, a rich tax collector, short of stature, who ‘wanted to see who Jesus was’. Zacchaeus solves his problem by climbing a tree, not the action of a dignified rich man. This action attracts Jesus’ attention. He stops and announces that he must stay at his house. Zacchaeus once again abandons decorum and hurries down to welcome him. Once the crowd realises what is happening they grumble about Jesus accepting hospitality from a sinner. Zacchaeus declares that he will give half his possessions to the poor and if he has defrauded anyone he will pay back four times as much. Jesus meets Zacchaeus where he is and asserts, ‘Today salvation has come to this house’. Jesus then gives as his reason, ‘He too is a son of Abraham.’ The account of this meeting concludes with Jesus’ words, ‘For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost’.

This meeting takes place on several levels. Firstly, Zacchaeus implements a strategy that allows him to meet his objective to see who Jesus is. This is the catalyst for the second deeper level of encounter when Jesus invites himself to Zacchaeus’ home. The crowd’s interaction with Zacchaeus prompts him to make his extraordinary gesture of charity and reparation. The final level of encounter is when Jesus, accepting him as he is, declares that Zacchaeus is saved.

**Some activities for working with the text**

- Investigate the role of tax-collectors in Jesus’ time. For whom did they work? What rules did they have to follow? How did they assess the tax? How did they get paid for their work?
- Search the number of times that Luke refers to ‘tax-collectors and sinners’. What is Jesus’ relationship with them? What do others say about Jesus’ relationship with tax-collectors and sinners?
- Brainstorm words that describe Jesus in this story. Devise questions for which each of these words is the answer.

The notion of encounter with Jesus can be a useful tool for examining scripture with a view to seeing who Jesus is.

Kaye Clancy

*Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.*

*Lk 19:10*
For the average person, prayer is the conscious effort to turn one’s heart and mind to the Lord. We try to enter into communion with God in ways that rely upon our early experiences of prayer and the various approaches with which we are most comfortable. Whether we recite the traditional prayers – the *Our Father*, *Hail Mary*, and *Glory Be* – or read the little book of prayers our mother or grandmother gave us, we are seeking to know God through Jesus, to praise and thank God, and to know what God wants for us. This yearning to be at one with God, to know Jesus, God’s Son, and to be responsive to the movement of the Holy Spirit is the sign of a healthy spiritual life of seeking God.

Scripture is our entry point into the ‘world’ of Jesus and his relationship with his Father. It is through the example of Jesus and the instructions he gave to his disciples that we are able to explore how he strengthened his relationship with God through prayer.

There are many ways we can pray the Scriptures. We can use *Lectio Divina*, where we focus upon a scriptural word or phrase that speaks to the heart, allowing it to resound prayerfully all day. Or, we might consider or feel comfortable praying the rosary, sitting quietly meditating upon the Scripture story for each decade, responding with the slow recitation of the *Hail Mary*. Another form of prayer we might favour is the total immersion of the senses into the prayer experience. As we behold creation, we might enter into a meditation on the sight, smell, and sound of a waterfall, or of a garden, or of birds.

We may find that, when approaching Scripture, meditating and reflecting upon the events of Jesus’ life leads us into acts of loving service. Our prayer directs us outwards to the service of others.

The scriptures are a rich treasure trove for meditation, as the imagination is capable of being engaged or immersed in an event or story. This type of prayer is not new. The chosen people of Israel regularly immersed themselves in an event so that they might relive and participate in that event in some way. We need only think of the Exodus event. Here we will address two approaches for the use of the imagination with Scripture. We can place ourselves in the particular scripture scene or passage in order to draw from the interaction with the characters some insight for our current situation. Alternatively, we can take a particular passage, transpose the world of Jesus into the contemporary world, and glean some insight for our current situation.

When we come to pray in this way, we sit in a quiet area, place our feet flat on the floor or sit in a position that we can sustain for a reasonably long period. As we come to stillness, we acknowledge the presence of God and the indwelling of the
Holy Spirit. Then we pick up the scripture and read the text through thoroughly, reflecting on the characters, the setting and the narrative. St Ignatius, a proponent of this approach said about his meditation on the Nativity scene:

I will make myself a poor, little, unworthy servant and, as though present, look upon them, contemplate them and serve them in their needs with all possible homage and reverence. Then I will reflect on myself that I may reap fruit.

As we step into the passage, we immerse ourselves in the scene and interact with the characters. We listen and respond according to the context and narrative of the story. When we have completed the meditation, we take time to sit with the experience. It is important to reflect on the interaction and conversation that took place. When we spend this time, we draw forth greater insight and understanding that we can apply in our lives and which can strengthen us.

If we are praying with Scripture, we draw inspiration for our contemporary situation by sitting with the text and interpreting it for today’s world. Using this approach to prayer, we would sit with a story from the Scriptures, become familiar with it and quietly come to stillness. We would allow our imaginations to take the story, characters and narrative and imagine this same narrative within our contemporary setting. We might sit with Jesus as he responds to a situation that is familiar, causing us concern, or joy. We engage with Jesus, one of the Apostles or even St Paul in an effort to gain insight and understanding into our current situation. This prayer takes us to the feet of Jesus and the early Church communities of Paul and, through conversation and interaction, we come closer to the person of Jesus and deepen our love of God.

A MEDITATION

PREPARE

Find a place that is comfortable and quiet. Select your story from Scripture. We will use Mark 1: 16–20, Jesus calls the first disciples. Read the story through a couple of times to become very familiar with it.

Now make sure you are very comfortable, with your feet flat on the floor.

Breathe in deeply ... Breathe out slowly...

As you breathe out, feel your whole body become still and calm from your head to your toes.

Breathe gently in ... and out ...

With each breath allow your body to relax, breathe out any tension and tightness.

Move from your head, down through your neck and shoulders, your arms and hands ... your abdomen ... your legs and feet.
Continue to breathe gently and rhythmically ... becoming more and more still ... 

In this stillness and inner quiet, acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit with each breath and seek the guidance of God’s Spirit.

**MEDITATION**

Imagine you are in Israel. Visualise the rugged hills and the green banks of the Jordan River.

You have come to the region of Galilee and have walked there hoping to catch a glimpse of Jesus, the person you have heard so much about. You are near the lake of Galilee. Visualise the large lake as you walk near it.

You walk down to the lake intending to cool your feet after your long walk. You sit at the side of the lake with your feet in the water.

In the distance you see the fishing boats. The fishermen are working hard to support their families.

You stand up to have a closer look at the boats. You might buy some fish for later.

As you wander round the lake, you think about what you know of Jesus.

As you approach the boats, you see a man talking to some of the fishermen. You keep walking and as you get closer, you hear what he is saying.

It is Jesus talking to Simon and his brother Andrew as they are casting their nets.

‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’

What does his voice sound like? Imagine he is saying those words to you. What do you think he means?

What is Simon and Andrew’s response? Watch as they turn to look at Jesus, and look at each other, and then jump out of their boat and follow him.

You go with them. You begin to talk with them. What questions will you ask? Go to Simon or Andrew and ask your questions.

Jesus moves on to James and John, two more fishermen. He speaks to them ... What do you think he is saying? What do the fishermen do?

Jesus then turns and looks at you ... . What is Jesus saying to you? What is Jesus calling you to?

Then sit quietly by the lake with Jesus ... listen to what he is saying ... speak to him ... tell him how you will follow him too ... .

When you have finished your conversation, thank Jesus for the time with him and walk away pondering what you have seen and heard.

Now become aware once again of your breathing ... Slowly breathe in and out, as you allow yourself to come gently back to the present.

Sit for a while pondering your insights and discoveries from your time with Jesus.

Sharon Freeman
Stories that are uniquely Luke’s

There are a few stories that appear only in Luke and these have tended to become our favourites when working with students in preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

- The Lost Sheep (Luke 15: 3-7)
- The Lost Coin (15: 8-10)

Whenever you are working with stories that are particularly familiar it is always valuable to take a fresh look at them to see if there are any new insights.

Read the text and check a good commentary before you plan to work with one of the stories and your students.

The Man Who Fell among Thieves

Mostly when we use this text, we rely upon a dramatic representation to assist the students in their understanding of the message. Unless you have worked with the students exploring this text for a significant amount of time, drama can do very little to assist the student’s learning, even though they will have fun and enjoy it very much. You might like to try the following activity with the students to assist them with their understanding. (Adapted from Dan White et al. Deep Thinking: An ‘Essential’ for Learning.)

Using a handprint, have the students fill out each Finger/thumb with the answers to these questions. This could be done individually, in pairs or as a group.

Thumb

What are the facts of the story? What do we know about the characters?

Index Finger

How would you feel if you were attacked? What feelings would you have had if you knew you had to pass by the man without helping him?

Middle Finger

Develop a simile that connects the message with the contemporary world. E.g. When the Priest and Levite walk past the man, it is like when we cross the road because a homeless person is walking towards us.

Little Finger

What might be a hypothetical scenario? E.g. What if the innkeeper refused to care for the man? What might have happened if the Samaritan was the one attacked?

Ring Finger

Present an opinion about some issue relevant to the topic and give a reason why. E.g. Everyone should be required to staff a soup kitchen once a month. We are the same as the Levite when we walk past the homeless in our streets.
**The Lost Sheep**

This story is about exaggeration and abundance. It would be helpful if the students could appreciate how extravagant and unusual it is for the shepherd to just leave 99 and go hunting for one sheep. Try the following activities with the students to deepen their appreciation of this story.

- Invite the students to pretend to be the lost sheep and write a journal entry at the end of the day.
- Invite students to reflect upon the feelings of the 99 sheep who were left behind. On a sheet with ‘the 99 sheep’ in the middle, have students record all the feelings and why, around the outside, e.g:

  ![Diagram of feelings]

Have the students complete the following grid. This looks at the ‘normal’ or ‘expected’ actions and the extravagant action of the Shepherd.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Action in the Story</strong></th>
<th><strong>Normal actions</strong></th>
<th><strong>Jesus’ Message</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The shepherd leaves 99 sheep to find the lost one.</em></td>
<td><em>A shepherd would make sure there was someone to watch the sheep before he left</em></td>
<td><em>God’s love is always concerned for the one who is lost.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*Good News for Catechists Term 2 2010*
THE LOST COIN

This too, is an extravagant story. If we lost a small coin we probably would not go looking too hard for it. We would acknowledge its loss and continue doing what we do each day. Here Jesus is trying to help us see the total extravagance of God who seeks the lost ones (no matter how insignificant) and rejoices when they are found.

1. Try putting the short story to music. Using a familiar tune the children can rework the story, keeping true to the message and the essential elements, into a song that the class could learn, e.g. to the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.

I have lost my coin of ten.  
Search and search and search again.  
Light the lamp and sweep the floor.  
Search the shelf and behind the door.  
Rejoice! Rejoice everyone!  
Here, oh here, is my lost one!

The task of keeping true to the message of the story ensures that the students have to first identify the message, which is a great task. This would be a suitable activity for Years 4, 5 and 6 students.

2. AN INTERVIEW FOR CHANNEL 47 – JUDEA TODAY

- Allocate the students into two or three groups depending upon the number in the class. Have four students in each group.

- Each student is to take on one of the characters: the woman, Jesus, a representative of the disciples and the interviewer.

- Either have some questions ready (if you have Year 1 or Year 2 students), or have the students prepare a series of 5 questions that they can ask the woman, Jesus and the disciples about the lost coin.

The questions must make clear what the message is that Jesus wants to get across (that this woman seems quite excessive and ‘over the top’. but God is like that with us. God will rejoice whenever we have been lost and found again).

- Present the interview to the whole group.

Sharon Freeman

Reference:
Engaging Children in Children’s Liturgy of the Word

Ensure that you have some understanding of the Scriptures for the day and have allowed them to say something to your own heart.

Follow the established rhythm of the Liturgy of the Word with adults. You don’t have to reinvent the ritual every week.

Greet the children, sit them down and begin with a prayer—you can use the Sign of the Cross even though they have already begun with that in the church—plus a brief prayer for God’s help in listening well to the word given to us.

Read the First Reading (it is optional to have this) or have one of the children who is a competent reader, and who has prepared it, read it. Allow some time of quiet after it.

Sing the psalm response and/or Gospel acclamation. Stand to sing this.

Proclaim the Gospel.

Devise a way of reflecting on the Gospel together

Contemplative questions – I wonder what the disciples might have thought? I wonder why Jesus did that? I wonder if we sometimes feel like this? I wonder what they might have done next? I wonder what we can do?

Symbolic actions – lighting candles, using water or oil, raising hands in prayer. Quiet music might accompany symbolic actions.

Role play – acting out the story. Simple props help this.

Echo mime – write out the Gospel in short phrases. You say the words and perform the actions—the children repeat them one phrase/action at a time.

Visual art – group projects are best or projects where everyone’s individual work contributes to the whole. Quiet music might accompany this.

Game – occasional Gospels lend themselves to a game such as ‘hide-and-seek’ or a ‘treasure hunt’.

Play with prayer materials – after reflecting on the Gospel yourself, think about what you have at home that might make the Gospel come alive for the children and bring it along. They can look and play and re-tell the gospel story with objects and toy figures.

Invite the children to suggest what you might pray for in the light of the Gospel. The older ones will be able to frame their own prayers, ending with the traditional ‘Lord, hear us’. You might need to help younger ones. All respond with ‘Lord, hear our prayer’, or other appropriate response. Conclude with singing, as the song can be lengthened or shortened as necessary.

In some parishes, it is good if the children can then carry the bread and wine and their lighted candle to the altar.

Catherine Place
In Christ’s Presence: The Eucharist

DATE: Wednesday 28 April 2010 from 9.00am to 3.00pm.

PARTICIPANTS: Catechists preparing students for the first reception of the Eucharist. Registration essential.

Catechist Diploma Course Unit 2

DATE: 4–5 May 2010 from 9.00am to 5.00pm.

PARTICIPANTS: Those already enrolled in the course.

The Contemplative Parish

DATES: 5 May and 28 October from 10.30am to 3.30pm.

PARTICIPANTS: Parish RECs, Pastoral Associates, RCIA leaders, catechists. Register by completing the brochure sent to parishes.

Certificate in Coordination 1

Date: Wednesday 26 May 2010 from 9.00am to 5.00pm.

PARTICIPANTS: Catechist Coordinators or Pastoral Associates with responsibility for catechetics. Registration essential.

Catechist Diploma Course Unit 3

Date: 8–9 June 2010 from 9.00am to 5.00pm.

PARTICIPANTS: Those already enrolled in the course.

Learning and Teaching Strategies for Juniors

DATE: Wednesday 30 June 2010 from 9.00am to 3.00pm. (Will be repeated in Term 3.)

PARTICIPANTS: Those interested in and those who are teaching Prep, Grade 1 or Grade 2 students. Registration essential.

Children’s Liturgy Support Group

DATE: Friday 23 July, 10.30am to 12.30pm.

PARTICIPANTS: Parish leaders of Children’s Liturgy of the Word on Sundays. Register by completing the brochure sent to parishes.