

Family Catechesis Activities 2013-2014

St John the Evangelist, Kirkdale

There were four elements to the activities this year:

Open Church

'Messy' Church

'Stations on the Path of Faith'

Christmas Invitations/Star Tree

There were also a symbols, one from each 'With You Always' session, which were used on one of the Stations.

Open Church

These were held mid-week, running from 2-45- 4-00pm.

Many of the families walk past the church on their way to and from school, so the timing was intended to coincide with that at the end of the school day.

For each of these there were three prayerful activities always accompanied by appropriate music .

November: Tree of Remembrance, prayer cards, candles

Ash Wednesday: Baptism font, footsteps, ashes and first 'station' meditation

Lent: Theme of Caring, poster for discussion/meditation, jewels in the heart, postcards to Jesus.

Mary, Mother of God (May): Rosary, prayer beads, a chance to look at different rosaries, prayer/candles at the Lady Altar

The completed displays and activities were left in church and members of the parish community were able to add to them or use them for reflection.

As with the other activities information was given out before hand in both the school and the parish in the form of posters and notices on the Parish Bulletin. Afterwards the parish community was encouraged to get involved in the ways outlined above by a 'write-up' in the parish Bulletin and by Fr Michael talking about them at Mass.

Christmas Invitations/Star Tree

The tree of remembrance was successful and gave us the idea to combine the traditionally popular Family Mass on Christmas Eve with invitations to that Mass to all of the families whose children had been baptized during 2013. We created a 'Star Tree' with the intention that every family would place a star on the tree for the baptized children and all the other children who attended Mass would do the same.

We created themed invitations and personalized them. These were then sent to the parents by post in the couple of weeks before Christmas. A lot of children were present and the tree was filled with stars!

Messy Church

This year we have held four seasonal 'Messy' events.

Advent

Lent

Holy Week

Pentecost

Each event has developed from the one before to bring in more elements as you will see.

As with Open Church, all of the events were well publicised, with posters in church and school. Additionally, children were given personal invitations, via school. We focused on Year 4 initially, and then at Pentecost on Years 3 and 4, though other children from the school and children from families who attend church but not the school were welcome and came along.

Advent (held on the first Sunday of Advent)

Primarily craft activities related to Advent:

Advent Wreaths

Mobiles of the Holy Family

Jesse Tree (names and symbols)

All of these were kept in church during Advent and the Advent wreaths taken home after the Christmas Eve Mass.

Some of the parents asked for craft materials to take home to make things up with younger children!

Lent

Because of the fact that I work across two parishes, we had to have the Lent Messy on the second week of Lent,

Because of the theme of the gospel, we created a Bedouin style tent for the story telling (see pictures!!!). We made four panels from thick linen cloth for the entrance to the tent and the children used paints to decorate these, both hand prints and foam shapes. These dried whilst the other activities were going on.

I created large outline pictures of the gospel and of the gospel of the following week and the children created mosaics of these.

We also had prayer cubes and pyramids which the children decorated and personalized.

In addition this time we had a part of the time reserved for music/singing and dance with signing of the words.

Two of the mosaics were mounted on boards and displayed in the church, one on the altar steps, the other two, designed with the Third Sunday in mind, were used as the next 'Station'.

Holy Week

This time we introduced the idea of food and drink around the idea of The Last Supper.

We invested in a bread maker and after several practices, the children, watched us put the ingredients into the machine and the bread baked whilst the rest of the activities went on.

Next they decorated crosses which were to be mounted onto the cross on Holy Week Station, a cross cut out from black card and backed with cellophane.

They then thought about God's generous, caring love and mounted jewels onto a heart, writing on these the names of people they felt had cared for them. They then posted a note to Jesus thanking Him for His love and making their own commitment to care.

These notelets and the post box are actually still in the church, as 'Caring is for Life', not just for Easter.

Music and dance featured again before they gathered to eat the baked bread, grapes and drink juice.

Pentecost

This was actually held on Pentecost Sunday!

We began with the idea of Pentecost as a celebration for the Church and so had a whole variety of cakes and biscuits which the children decorated to eat later!

Again we had prepared a template for one of the stations and they personalised 'flame coloured' hands to mount onto the 'open flame' station. We then worked in teams to create wind socks from red card, doves, flames and red and gold material.

Along with the theme of air/wind/movement we added some parachute games this time with balls and balloons! They loved this!

Still active we kept with the music and dance, finishing with the decorated cakes. A real celebration.

The wind socks were placed hanging from the choir loft at the back of church. They were left there for the ordination on July 12th!

Stations on the Path of Faith

12 windows divide the Side Chapel Meeting Room from the main church.

I decided that it would be an idea to journey through Lent via the windows, offering a different image each week. This developed to Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, Confirmation and First Communion and finally Roy Cooper's Ordination! I wanted each image to be in a different style and hopefully to be created by different people including the children. Several were made during 'Messy' activities and the final one for the Ordination was made by Year 4 with help from their teachers in school. Each image would be captioned by a short reflective saying. The 'Stations' would be there in church as a constant source of inspiration and reflection for all the parish community.

Fr. Michael made mention of them during Mass and there was almost always something in the weekly Parish Bulletin.

We are reluctant to take them down!!

'With You Always Symbols'

We created a display at the start of the course in an special area at the back of the church but once the children started to create the symbols they outgrew the space and so we used one of the free standing notice boards to build up a visual representation of Year 4's journey through the year. We chose a symbol to represent the theme of each session which the children either completed at the session or took home and brought back e.g. Fish, doves, prayer cubes, hands etc

Because we were creating a poster on the 'Stations' for Confirmation and First Communion we decided to use these symbols as a 'frame' for the poster, leaving a generic display at the back of church.

Developments

- Pew Pouches at Sunday Mass for younger children who are not able to access Children's Liturgy of the Word
- Developing aspects of Children's Liturgy of the Word
- Working more with the children who have just been confirmed and have made their First Communion-creating a 'Faith Club' in school so that these children, now in Year 5, can play a part in the Family Masses which we plan to incorporate into the With You Always course.
- I am thinking of more With You Always specific Messy Church e.g. Reconciliation, **as well as** the seasonal ones.
- I would like to do a Reconciliation Workshop for adults (parents/guardians/catechists).....!

Anne Shepherd
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