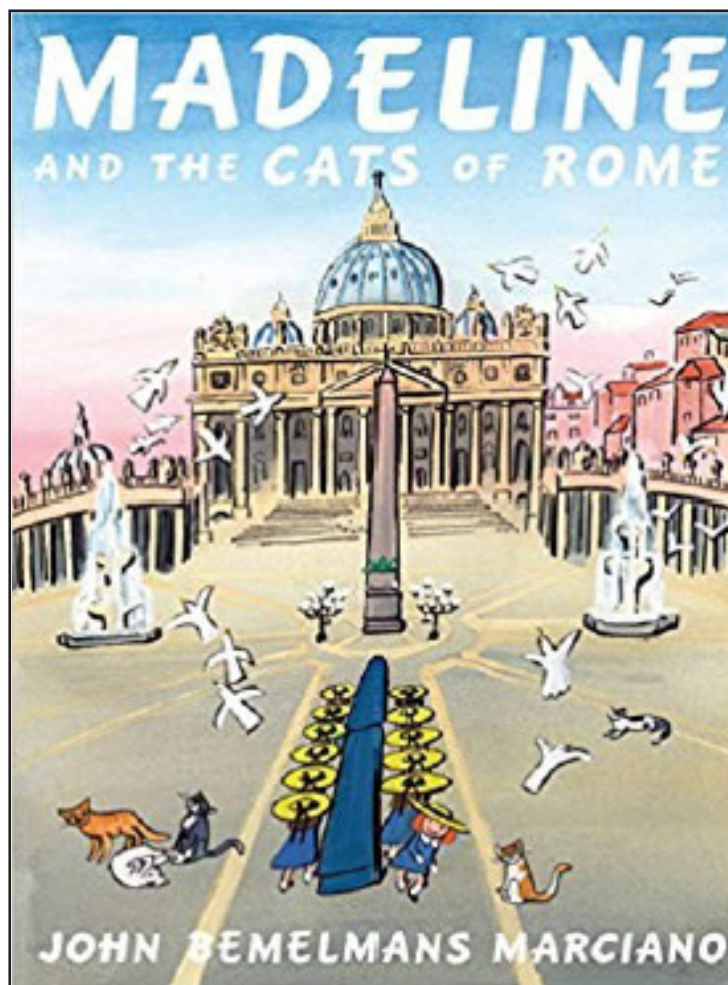


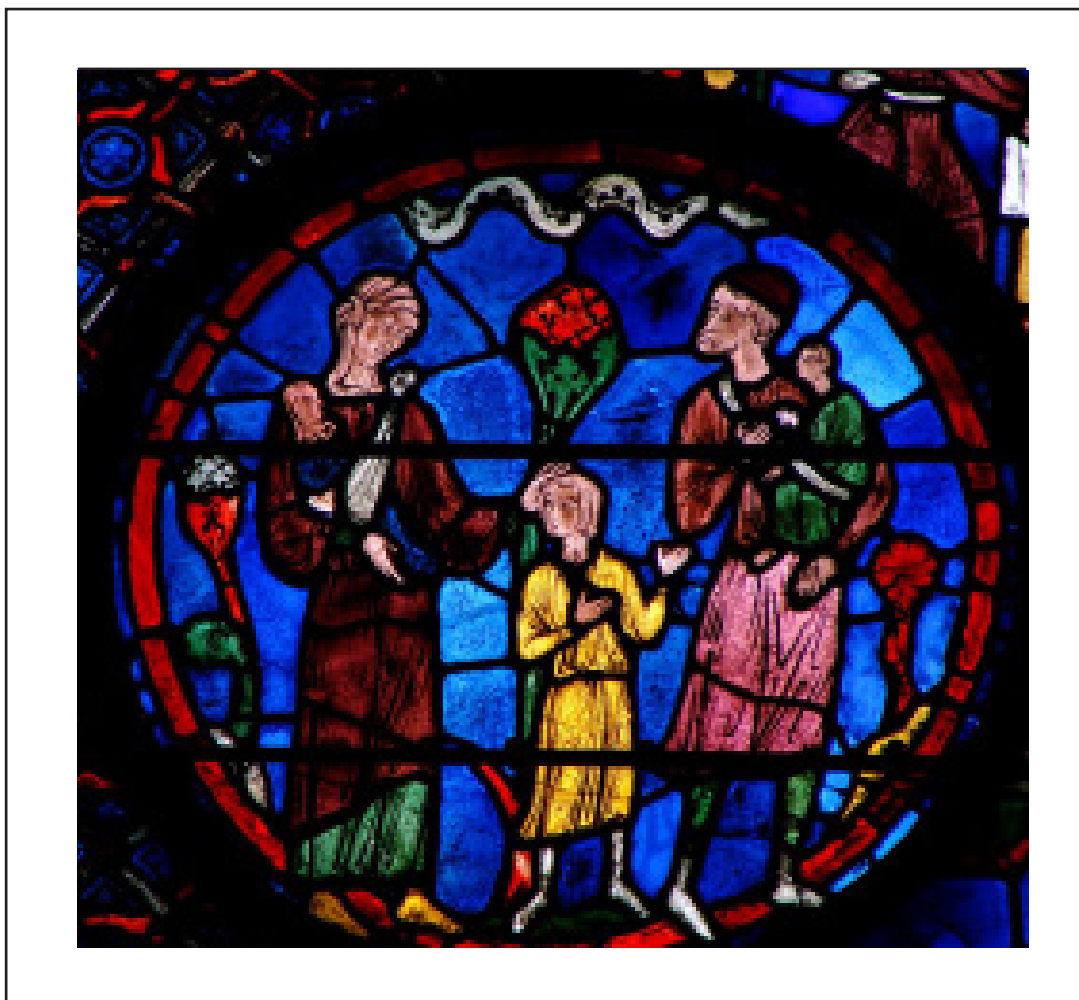
Living Grace

CYCLE B 27TH SUNDAY
ORDINARY TIME

“JESUS & MADELINE ON THE LAW OF LOVE”



*In **Madeline and the Cats of Rome**, the Paris skies are gray, so Miss Clavel and the twelve little girls are leaving for brighter weather - Spring in Rome. Rome has wonderful sights to see and delicious things to eat, but Madeline also finds an unexpected adventure, involving a thief, a chase, and many, many cats. The story turns out to have an unexpected twist when Madeline discovers that thief, Caterina, may not be as bad as she initially seems to be...*



FAMILY

*Stained Glass ~ 13th Century
Chartres Cathedral ~ Chartres, France*

EXPLORING THE ART:

Chartres Cathedral is home to the largest collection of preserved medieval stained glass windows in the world, most of them dating from the early years of the 13th century - a legacy of the thriving artistic, intellectual, and spiritual activity of the time. The Middle Ages had an all-pervasive Christian culture - which is alien to us now. People of that time would have instantly understood the meaning behind the images in the stained glass windows. The images painted on the stone and glass of medieval churches were there not so much to educate Christians, as to praise God. Even more importantly than sending a message of praise, the main function of the images depicted in the windows was to create a heavenly atmosphere within the cathedral, and to echo the liturgy by providing a permanent visual reminder of the liturgical gestures and the texts read during the services. For such a huge project, hundreds of artists and craftsmen were required who worked under the supervision of Master Artists who all had very different talents and preferences. Each group of artisans used its own unique set of colors appropriate to the atmosphere they were attempting to create, and the location of the window in the cathedral (blue is more radiant, making it more suitable for the north side, while red, which filters out light, is best on the south side). The arrangement of colors sometimes has a symbolic meaning, but was more often designed to create an ornamental and artistic effect.

STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Living Grace

READ-ALoud STORY



ABIDE IN ME

Vicki Shuck, Esperanza Arts

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love.

~ John 7:7-9

Read-aloud video link:

MADELINE AND THE CATS OF ROME

Written & Illustrated by John Bemelmans Marciano

Sunday Gospel

MARK 10:2-16

The Pharisees approached Jesus and asked,
"Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?"
They were testing him.
He said to them in reply, "What did Moses command you?"
They replied,
"Moses permitted a husband to write a bill of divorce
and dismiss her."
But Jesus told them,
"Because of the hardness of your hearts
he wrote you this commandment.
But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female.
*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh.*
So they are no longer two but one flesh.
Therefore what God has joined together,
no human being must separate."
In the house the disciples again questioned Jesus about this.
He said to them,
"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another
commits adultery against her;
and if she divorces her husband and marries another,
she commits adultery."

And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them,
but the disciples rebuked them.
When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them,
"Let the children come to me;
do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to
such as these.
Amen, I say to you,
whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child
will not enter it."
Then he embraced them and blessed them,
placing his hands on them.

Making the Connections

FOR ADULTS

JESUS FREES US FROM HARDNESS OF HEART BY POINTING TO THE YEILDING SPIRIT OF A CHILD. THIS "WAY" OPENS OUR LIVES TO UNITY WITH GOD AND EACH OTHER.

For Jesus marriage is more than a contract; marriage is a call to union with God and is the creation of a partnership. God and union are at the center of marriage. This is what the focus should be, rather than the letter of the law, valued by the leaders of the day. General laws ask for a minimal amount of work and contemplation. Spiritual realities hold an invitation to grow the Kingdom of God, to respond as God would. The way of the Kingdom reaches out to the vulnerable "first". Women and children are a priority with Jesus. This is a very countercultural value during the time of Jesus.

Jesus gets indignant when the children are held back from him. He is likely upset with the disciples because he is frustrated that they still are not understanding that the least among them are to be valued as the greatest! Children teach us to be receptive to the laws of joy, care, and love. This is the way to embrace the love of God with openness.

Madeline and Caterina in our story understand the importance of the "law of love" over the "law of the land". They may go about pursuing the laws of love in the wrong way, by breaking the law, but their hearts are responding to a greater call. They are prioritizing the needs of the vulnerable and needy - the lost and hungry cats.

Hearts filled with love, expressed by children, win care and liberation for the many. This is the way of the Kingdom of God! Children get it! This is the point that Jesus, Madeline, and Caterina demonstrate. The results are transforming and liberating. Love rules!

Making the Connections

FOR CHILDREN

MY STORY: What do you think Jesus means by "hardness of hearts"? As family members, do we sometimes harden our hearts to each other? What kind of problems do hardened hearts create?

THE CHILDREN'S STORY: What makes Caterina break the law? Is it alright for her to do so? Is Caterina's hardness of heart what causes her to break the law? What surprise does Madeline discover? Madeline and Caterina come from different countries and neighborhoods - what is it that brings them together?

THE GOSPEL STORY: Was getting a divorce allowed in the time of Jesus? What laws of love would marriage between two people call for? God never wants people to be hurt. He wants people to be loved and cared for. Do people in our world always put women and children first? Are there times when marriages need to break up for that to happen?

What are some examples as to what an open vs. a closed heart looks like? Which causes the real crime? How might we work together to grow the law of love in our families and our communities? What good outcomes would come from trying to do this?

Biblical Background

MARK 10:2-16

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: This dialogue continues with Jesus and his disciples in Capernaum. The synagogue in Capernaum is right across the street from Peter's house, so this scene would be occurring in front of the synagogue where the religious leaders, the Pharisees, would be coming and going for prayer. Back in the house, there would be movement from the public area to the private area of Peter's house that would have been filled with Peter's wife, mother, children, extended family members, and guests.

TERMS: Pharisee The Pharisee branch of Judaism believed holiness resides in the home with the family. The Sadducees emphasized the need to have the temple because that was where holiness resides. A Pharisee would be the keeper of the law and would put the emphasis of holiness on the home. This is, possibly, why their concerns on the question of divorce and children are so intense.

Law of Moses The first five books of the Bible are called the Torah and were said to have been written by Moses in that time.

Hardness of heart Middle Eastern culture considers the heart as the center of thought and decision making - where the will and choices would be discerned. To be in a state of hardness of heart is to be closed off from God's ability to influence and move in a loving and Godly direction.

Touch A sign of healing, protection and blessing.

CULTURAL INSIGHT: In the Mediterranean world, marriages were between families. Just as God chooses one's parents, parents choose a partner for their child's marriage. Therefore, divorce was very difficult because marriage was the bringing together and binding of two families. It was shameful to divorce, so families would do all they can to save their honor. In the Middle East this is still true today, many marriages are arranged. A divorce in the time of Jesus would likely result in family feuding which needed to be avoided at all costs. Jesus elevates marriage above a physical partnership of two parties, to a spiritual and bodily union. He also raises the status of woman in the contractual relationship. In Jesus' estimation, marriage is an even partnership and a contract that God creates.

INSIGHT INTO MEANING: Jesus raises marriage from the state of the law - which is the level the Pharisees work with - to the state of a union of flesh and spirit. Due to hardness of heart, marriage was contractual in nature and was considered a social contract between two families. Therefore, it could be broken. Jesus elevates marriage to a state of union in mind, spirit, and flesh. Marriage is a spiritual union that is created by God and mirrors the union that we all share in God. Here Jesus raises the bar of marriage to the reality of union in God who is love. Therefore, the Catholic Church takes the process of divorce very seriously. It just doesn't end with a broken social contract of two families.

Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME
AND IN THE WORLD



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: How could children of different backgrounds in your neighborhood or school work together to reach out to a need in the community?

CHARACTER QUALITIES: SEEING THE GREATER GOOD
EMBRACING DIVERSITY

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: Caring for animals is a wonderful way for children to care for those who are even more vulnerable and dependent than they are. Take time to visit an animal shelter. Are there laws that need to be changed to help animals get the love and care they deserve? How might you as a family advocate for the needs and care of animals in your community?