

Cycle A

Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Lectionary 112

Reading I: Isaiah 55: 1-3

Isaiah writes this to the people of Israel during the nation's darkest period, the exile in Babylon. This particular prophecy is made toward the end of the exile in what is referred to as Second Isaiah. The words of **compassion** are clear and present. It is a lover's pleading call to *come, eat, drink, heed, listen, COME!* God's arms are outstretched and ready to comfort. God's table is set with the richest fare and God holds nothing back in requesting our response. These same words of **compassion** are being spoken today for there are many who are still hungry, thirsty and in need of God's embrace. The message is clear that God, in his **compassion**, will watch over us, correct us when necessary and love us forever.

Reading 2: Romans 8: 35, 37-39

Saint Paul proclaims that the Paschal Mystery, the life, death and resurrection of Christ, is the ultimate expression of God's love and **compassion** bestowed on the world. This action has removed every obstacle to our oneness with our God and has shattered every power that would separate us from his love. Christ's saving action has changed reality forever. Now, through the grace Christ has won for us, we can overcome all worldly hardships and sufferings. Even otherworldly powers ("angel..principalities") will hold no sway. God's loving **compassion** is ours!

Gospel: Matthew 14: 13-21

Jesus has just heard of the death of John the Baptists and this news must have saddened him deeply as he goes off by himself to be in his grief. The throngs of people in need shifts Jesus' focus from his needs to theirs. He looks upon them with **compassion**, for *his heart was moved with pity for them*. Not only does Jesus cure the sick and speak words of hope and consolation, he is moved to nourish their bodies as well as their spirits. Jesus works this miracle known as the Loaves and the Fishes to indicate that it is only God who can take our paltry offerings (five loaves and two fish) and transform them into food for the world. There are definite Eucharistic overtones in this passage and the Eucharist is yet another sign of God's **compassion**.



build. plant. grow.
the word this week



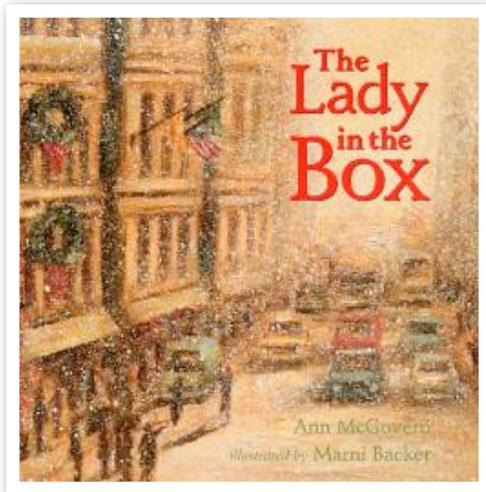
ordinary
time



lectionary
reading



children's story



The Lady in the Box

Written by Ann McGovern

Illustrated by Mami Backer

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character
education
activity

**The ultimate revelation of
God's loving covenant with
humanity is in the person of
Jesus Christ and all that Jesus
Christ has done for us.**

The Lady in the Box

This story speaks to the ever present reality of the homeless and the hungry that are common scenes in today's society. It is wintertime in the city and freezing cold, but not everyone is inside and warm. Two children, a brother and sister by the names of Benny and Lizzy know that there is a lady who lives outside in a box over a warm air vent. The children worry about the kind looking lady and begin sneaking food and clothing to her from their apartment. The children find themselves in a dilemma as they feel **compassion** for the lady in the box, but also want to follow their parents advice to not talk to strangers. As the story progresses, the mother of the children is drawn to become an advocate for the woman and volunteers with her children at a soup kitchen where they all eventually are able to say hello to the lady in the box. They find out that her name is Dorrie. This is an excellent book to help children understand **compassion** for those in need.

Activity

Step One: Identify a senior care facility that is nearby the school or church where the students gather for their religious instruction. If possible, see if the care facility could provide the students with a picture and the names of the residents.

Step Two: If there are enough resident's pictures and names to share among the number of students, assign one to each child. If not, have the students buddy up to do the following activity.

Step Three: Provide the students with art supplies so that they can construct a card for the residents. Make certain that the cards and the writing are large enough to be read easily. A large type card with children's art placed on the wall of someone elderly has great meaning. Deliver the cards to the residents OR

Step Four: This would include the parents of the students: Have the parents accompany the students with the card they made to the care facility so that the student can deliver the card personally. Again, this would be something you as a teacher would want to check out with the parents before suggesting it to the students.

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



case study

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

What could you do today?

There are a great many people who are in need of a smiling face, a warm embrace and a helping hand. In conversation with your parents and family, find out if there is a particular person or group that your family would like to extend **compassion** to. Some examples that you and your family might consider would be veterans who have returned from being away from home for a long time, senior citizens, a soup kitchen, a facility that provides housing for the homeless, a neighbor who is elderly and lives alone, or any other groups or people you and your family might identify. Once you have made your decision, put together a plan so that the family can do this act of **compassion** (and hopefully many more) together. After the visit or kind act, take some time to talk about it as a family.

Look Feel Know Act

Given the above suggested activity decide as a family what you would like to commit yourselves to on a regular basis. You no doubt will feel good about the kindnesses and acts of **compassion** that you all do together as a family. Discussing what each person was feeling after the visit or activity will help you to better know the meaning and importance of **compassion**, not only for the one receiving it but also for those who are being the conduits for God's love. These actions will become part of your family memories and help all in the family to understand the greater concept of family that Jesus so often preached about.

The Lady in the Box is a wonderful story that parallels the **compassion** felt by Jesus in Matthew 14: 13-21 and the action that flowed from that. The children of the story see *the lady in the box* and are moved by what they see, so much so that they make a decision to reach out to her with food and clothing, while following their parent's instruction to not talk to strangers. The story speaks to the fact that children can often be the motivating factor for adults to move out of the busyness of their lives and enter into the meaningful work of providing **compassionate** service.

Pray the first section of the Prayer of Saint Francis, as we seek to do the work of compassion and healing.



**closing
tool**

*Lord, make me an instrument of
your peace;*

*Where there is hatred, let me sow
love;*

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is error, truth;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

And where there is sadness, joy.



**Santa Clara
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