



'Light for the Path' a Resource for Families in the Year of Mercy

Session Two for Children: Doors of Mercy at Home

We look

What is it like to come through the door at home after a long day at work, or nursery, or school, or having been out or away for a while? What's it like to be at home? When is it sometimes difficult to come through the door at home? Family life is busy – but we try to love each other. How do we show our 'merciful love'? Which door at home might be our 'door of mercy' where anyone who comes in can feel loved and accepted, or forgiven?

We listen

Jesus says 'I am the gate of the sheepfold. Anyone who comes through me will be safe. They can come in and go out and find good food to eat and fresh water to drink. I have come to bring everyone a full and happy life. I am the good shepherd. I lay down my life for my sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and they know me - just like the Father knows me, and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for my sheep. The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them life on earth and life in heaven. They will never be lost. No one will ever steal them from me. *Adapted from the New Jerusalem Bible Gospel of John, Chapter 10, verses 7, 9-11, 14-15, 27-28*

Book of Revelation, Chapter 3, verse 20. Look, I am standing at the door, knocking. If anyone hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share a meal with them.

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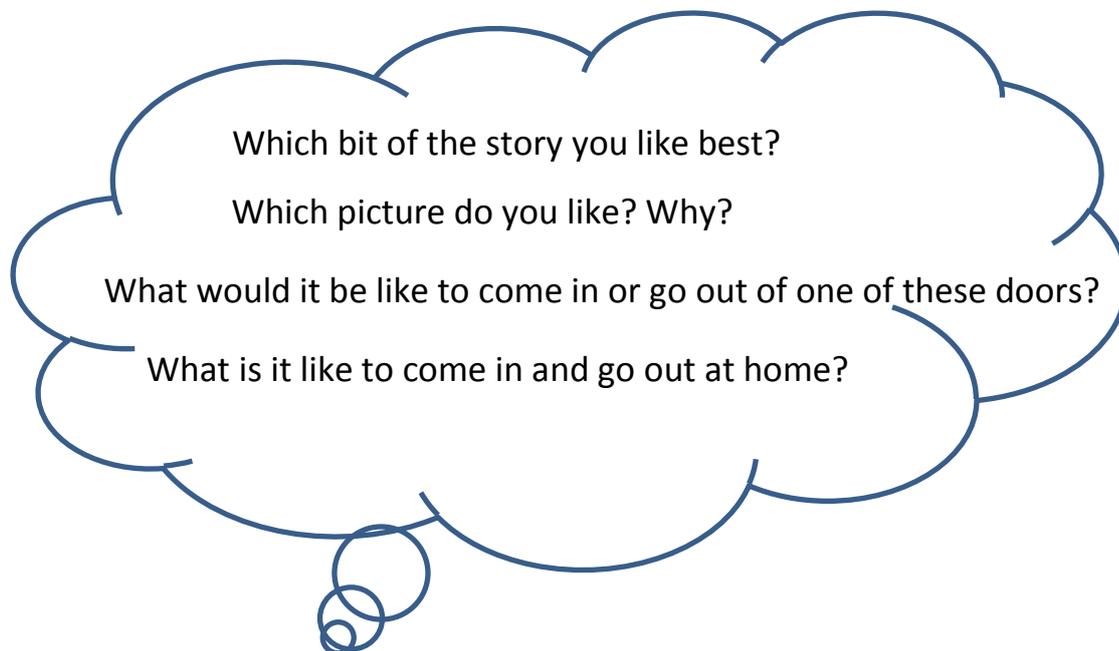
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We wonder.....



At Home

- When do we need someone to be a 'door of mercy' for us, to accept, love, heal, or forgive us?
- Is there someone sad, or lonely, or hurting who needs our special loving attention?

Perhaps arrange a **special family meal** to celebrate the Year of Mercy, and invite some family and friends. You could light a candle on the table as a sign of love and forgiveness, using your family blessing prayer as a 'grace' before you eat.



Pope Francis says that the mercy of God is like the love of a father or mother for their child or children. It is very deep and so much greater and stronger than any sadness or fear, or anything we have done wrong. Jesus is the 'Door' of God's mercy -we come through him, and are set free to love everyone!



You might like to draw and decorate a sign of welcome to hang by your front or back door, your 'door of mercy' so when anyone comes in, they feel accepted and welcome. You could use some of these words:

**'May this home be a place of happiness, of cheerful giving and of hope.
May this home be a place of love, kindness and forgiveness.
May everyone who comes here find joy and peace.'**

Tips for using this 'Year of Mercy' resource with children at home

1. **We gather:** Decide on the best time – before or after school, evening or weekend – for a quiet 10-30 minutes together.
2. **Background:** Share a bit of 'background' to the 'Holy Doors' and what they are for. You will find some notes below.
3. **We look at our experience and our Catholic Tradition:** Ask everyone what is the best part of going through the door at home? When is it hard to go through the door at home? Where do we have the best time together at home? When we have hurt one another, how does it make us feel? Where and when do we feel sorry, say sorry, and experience being forgiven? This is being 'merciful' like Jesus and the Father. What does everyone think?
4. **We listen to God's Word.** Read the story. For the very young, the pictures might help to talk about the story and the idea of 'holy' doors that are the gateway to freedom from worries, the gateway to living at peace, accepting yourself and others in love – to know and experience that God loves YOU very much too!
5. **We wonder:** Ask the 'wondering' questions. Have a conversation about these.
6. **Pope Francis says:** Look at the 'Pope Francis' box, and his teaching about mercy. What catches your attention? What is 'love' between us in a family like? What do we hope for?
7. **We respond:** Look at the 'At Home' box – and talk about this.
8. **What difference does this make?** Finally, draw or write out and decorate the 'prayer of blessing' for your own home. Put it up by the 'door of mercy' – front, or back, or any other door you have chosen.
9. **We pray:** Finish with a simple prayer (see an example below)

Prayer moment

Let's sit quietly for a moment, and remember the story and all we have shared together. As we think about Jesus as 'the Door' or 'the gate', and the doors of our homes and cathedrals being 'doors of mercy', open and inviting into a place where we show loving kindness, we pray:

Thank you for being with us as we gather here in your name Lord Jesus. Each day, you are the Door, the gateway, inviting us to step through, into a new way of living and loving, a new way of acceptance, kindness and respect for others, seeing them with your eyes. May our families and homes be places through which anyone can come in and experience the Father's love and mercy for them. Help us to make your love and mercy real. We make this prayer, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

You may like to finish with the prayer of welcome and blessing that you have made for your home.

Helpful Background

The 'Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy' or 'Holy Year of Mercy' began on 8th December 2015, in Advent, when Pope Francis opened the great Holy Door in St Peter's Church in Rome. These open holy doors are a sign of God's love and welcome for all, made through Jesus and His 'Body', that is all the people of the Church. When anyone comes through these doors, in Rome, or in the cathedral or other specially named places in our dioceses, the Church wants them to experience the love of God through the welcome and acceptance, listening and prayer of the people of God, showing the face of God's mercy in action, for all. Pope Francis says *'The Church wants to show herself a loving mother to all; patient, kind, moved by compassion and goodness towards her separated children'* (MV4) This love-in-action is lived out at home, in our saying 'please, sorry, and thank you' – that's how we love one another, and our love comes from God! *"We ourselves are part of this mystery of love and tenderness"* **Pope Francis, Homily 8.12.15. In bible times, the sheepfold was a circle of stone walls with one place to get in.** This 'gap' or 'gateway' was made safe by the shepherd lying across it. Jesus says he is the good shepherd who is the 'gate', and he is open. Come in through Jesus, and feel safe, loved and accepted. Then you can live a full and happy life, set free from old habits of sadness, being afraid or angry, and be kind and loving to everyone else, because you experience being so loved!