

Celebrating the Gift of Parenting

Environment Prepare a table with symbols of the life of children, e.g. toys, pictures, diapers, children's books, baptismal robes, first communion candles. Arrange chairs in a circle around this table. Have paper and pencils available.

Gathering Rite Play a CD or tape (be creative in making your own) with sounds of children, e.g. playground noises, baby crying, child's laughter, child praying or reading, teenage music.

Theme As parents we are called to be nurturing people of faith.

Introduction

Opening Prayer (All)

O God, You who are Mother and Father to us, send us your gift of wisdom and creative love as we gather to celebrate the wonder and awe of all that we are



called to be as parents to the children entrusted to our care. May we experience together the love you have for each of us as a Beloved Child created by you. As you delight in each of us as one called to be holy as you are holy, may we delight in the gift of each child we have brought to life.

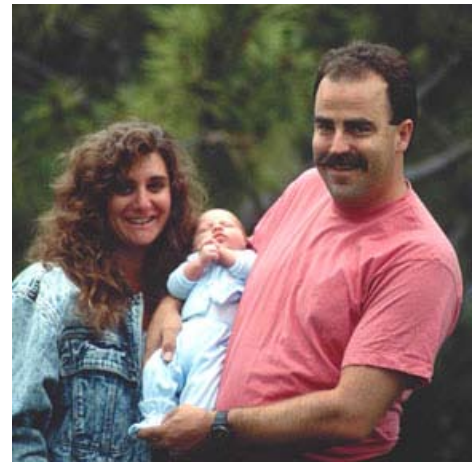
Help us to grieve where this is needed, as you grieve over our mistakes and failures.

Bless our sorrows and joys of remembering that we may bring the gift of wholeness and growth to the children we hold dear. We thank you for the blessings of our children and ask that we may ever be blessings to them, as we lead them to the knowledge and experience of your love. We ask this in our faith in you as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of all life. Amen.

Reflection

(We call God our Father and our Mother. Reflect for awhile on what images and qualities these titles for God bring to you. How and where have you experienced God as Father and Mother in your life?)

(Pause for silent reflection.)



Leader You are invited to share a thought or word that expresses your experience of God as parent.

(Pause for sharing.)

Jesus with Children

Leader Let us listen to the Gospel account of Jesus with children.

Reading Luke 18: 15-16

People were bringing even infants to Jesus that he might touch them, and when the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. Jesus, however, called the children to himself and said, "Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

Reflection Time

(Why did people bring their children to Jesus? What are the qualities of Jesus that drew parents to want their children to experience Jesus? How do you envision Jesus responded to the children?)

(Pause for silent reflection.)



Sharing

Leader What did this reflection say to you about the role of parenting? I invite you to share your responses.

Prayer Response

(All) We, as parents, declare to our children, Your faithfulness, O God.

Psalm 78 (Alternate sides)

I will open my mouth in story,
drawing lessons
from of old.
We have heard them,
as we know them;
We do not keep them
from our children.

(All) We, as parents,
declare to our children,
Your faithfulness, O God.

We recite them to the next generation,
The praiseworthy and mighty deeds of our God,
The wonders that God has performed.

(All) We, as parents, declare to our children,
Your faithfulness, O God.

What God commanded our ancestors,
they were to teach their children;
That the next generation might come to know,
children yet unborn.

(All) We, as parents, declare to our children,
Your faithfulness, O God.

In turn they were to recite them to their children,
that they too might put their trust in God,
And not forget the works of God,
keeping God's commandments.

(All) We, as parents, declare to our children,
Your faithfulness, O God.

Parental Blessings

Leader As Christians, we have been enriched by the blessing rituals through which we are empowered and are enabled to empower others. As parents, we are encouraged to bless our children daily or on special occasions and times of



need. We will now take time to write a blessing for our child/children to take home from this gathering.

Process

- *Begin by listing the gifts that you experience in your child.*
- *Name the concerns, fears that you have for this child at this time in his/her life.*
- *Bring your child to Jesus to sit on His lap and be touched by His loving hand.*
- *What words do you hear Jesus speaking to your child? Write these words.*
- *Name your deepest desires for your child.*

With all of this in mind, write the blessing you will give to your child. Keep your blessing short, and focused on what you want your child to remember.

(Allow time for writing. When finished invite sharing of the blessing by anyone willing to do so.)

Leader Let us now close with a blessing for our own lives as parents called to nurture our children in the gift of faith. Turn to one next to you; place your hand on the person's head or shoulder and pray for one gift you ask of God for that person.



Closing Prayer

(Together) O God, you who have blessed us in the sharing of your creative gifts as you entrust us with the care of your little ones, we humbly ask for your blessing this day. Give us a strong faith in your love that we will pass on to our children. Help us to be gentle and forgiving of ourselves as we strive to be the nurturing parents you have called us to become. Give each of us the courage and wisdom needed to always be faithful to You and to be the encouragement and example that will bring our children safely home to You. We pray in the name of Jesus, who blessed the little ones in gentle and caring love. Amen.