

# 1 Jesus calls us to make a difference

## A message for teachers and catechists

One of the key messages that Jesus gave is 'Do it to others and you are doing it to me.' So many of the things that he did for people were to help them and to make their lives better. He didn't just talk about things and preach to people, he got his hands dirty and did things for them. He made a real difference to their lives – and that is what he calls us to do for each other today.

In the gospel stories here we see Jesus making a difference in contrasting ways. The first was to help friends and to please his mother while the second will have radically changed the life of the man he helped.

It is easy to see how children can think that they are incapable of helping as Jesus did, but they need to realise that they too can make a radical difference to others by the love and affection they bring into people's lives. In 'The best birthday present' we see how one boy does this for his grandma.

At other times we can help people who live a long way off by the things we choose to do. In 'The talent show' we see how sometimes using your gifts and having a bit of courage and encouragement can help us make a difference to people we don't even know. In both stories the children help just by doing simple things.

## Gospel story

The marriage feast at Cana (John 2:1–12)

A long time ago, in a place called Cana, there was going to be a wedding. People had been getting ready for this wedding for a long time and they got more and more excited as the big day drew near. What most people didn't know was that there was going to be a very special guest at this wedding – a man whose name was Jesus.

When the day arrived, Jesus came to the wedding along with his mother and some of his friends. They were enjoying themselves when Mary, Jesus' mother, suddenly noticed that there was a problem. The wine was running out. Before long there was none left.

Now this was a serious problem because the celebration was still going on and people wanted to enjoy a glass of wine. Mary thought about this problem. She could see that it was going to be very embarrassing for the people who were organising the wedding and so she decided that they needed some help. Going over to Jesus she said to him,

'They seem to have run out of wine. Do you think you could do something to help them?'

Jesus didn't really want to help at first because he knew that soon he would want to start travelling and helping lots of people and he

was still getting ready for that. But, because his mother had asked him, he agreed.

She went over to the waiters and said, 'You'd better do whatever Jesus asks you.'

There were six huge water jars made out of stone standing at the side. They were used to hold water for getting washed. Jesus told the waiters to fill them up to the brim with water. They did this and then he said, 'Now take a little bit out and give it to the head waiter.'

They didn't really understand why but they did what he asked. To their astonishment, when the head waiter drank the water they had brought, it had turned into delicious wine.

He couldn't believe how nice it tasted. He went over to the bridegroom and said, 'I can't believe you've left this wine till the end. You should have served it at the beginning when people would have really appreciated it.'

It was only later, when people began to talk, that they realised that a wonderful thing had happened.

### Story link

In this story we see Jesus make a big difference to the people at the wedding by choosing to make the effort to do something good. He also will have made his mum very proud of him.

Today, Jesus asks us to make a difference to the people around us. Sometimes it is difficult to see how we can do that. Sometimes we can see how, but it is a lot of trouble so we don't. Often, though, we only need to do something very small to make other people happy.

In 'The best birthday present', we hear how Jack realised that making a difference to somebody else can be easier than you think.

### Today's story

The best birthday present

'No,' said Jack's mum. 'I won't give you any more pocket money. I've already told you that I don't have any money to spare.'

'But it's Grandma's birthday tomorrow and I want to buy her a present; you know I do,' shouted Jack angrily.

'Don't shout at me,' snapped his mum. 'You should have thought about Grandma when you were spending all your pocket money on yourself buying that new game.'

'But I've wanted it for ages,' grumbled Jack.

'Well, it would still have been in the shop next week and now you've no money left for Grandma. You could have waited.'

'Can I have next week's money then?'

'We don't have next week's money. You know that your dad lost his job and now we don't have any spare money at all. You'll just have to make Grandma a card.'

Jack glared at his Mum. 'I hate being poor,' he said.

'It wouldn't matter if you weren't so selfish,' she said. 'Now go out to play and stop moaning.'

Jack trailed outside, dragging his feet. 'Make a stupid card,' he grumbled to himself. 'Who wants to make a stupid card? It'll be rubbish!' But he didn't say it out loud. He could feel his mum's eyes still glaring at him and he reckoned that he'd pushed his luck far enough.

That night he went upstairs and took out his felt tips and a piece of card that his sister had given him. It took him half an hour to make the card and when he'd finished he frowned. It didn't look nearly as good as the ones in the shops.

He felt hot and uncomfortable inside when he thought about the game he'd bought. He'd known that it was Grandma's birthday because his mum had reminded him but all his friends had been talking about the game at school and he hadn't wanted to be the only one without it.

The next day he went to his Grandma's on his own to give her the card. She lived only three doors away.

'Tell Grandma to come at 5 o'clock,' shouted his mum as he went out. 'You know we're having a birthday party for her.'

His grandma opened the door when he arrived.

'Jack!' she said with a big smile. 'Come in.'

He held the card out. 'I made you this,' he said.

His grandma's smile got wider. 'That's lovely,' she said. 'Are you coming in?'

Jack hesitated for a minute. He'd been going to call for his friend but he knew that Grandma lived by herself and he decided to go in to keep her company for a few minutes as it was her birthday.

Grandma's house was usually very tidy but today the kitchen surface had things all over it and the floor of the lounge was covered with photographs.

'What are you doing?' asked Jack in surprise.

'Well, seeing as how I'm 62 today I thought I'd start making a memory book,' she said. 'And then, I remembered that I was going to your house for tea and so I decided to make a few biscuits. I seem to have got into a bit of a mess doing two things at once.'

Jack's face brightened. Grandma's cookies were the best. 'I can stay and help,' he offered.

Together they made two batches of cookies. When the second lot went in the oven to bake Grandma said,

'Well, I'm ready for some lunch. What about you?'

So they made sandwiches and then ate two cookies each.

'What are all the photographs?' asked Jack when they had finished.

'They're my memories,' said Grandma and she showed him photographs of his mum when she was a little girl and then a photograph of himself as a baby.

'You've got a lot of memories,' said Jack, looking at the piles of photographs.

'I know, and I'm just starting to sort them out.'

'Shall I help do that too?' asked Jack.

'I'd love you to,' she said. 'Are you sure you don't mind?'

Jack shook his head.

They worked together all afternoon, sorting the photographs into piles.

'Look at the time!' said Grandma suddenly. 'We'll have to get back to your house for the party.'

Jack's mum had made a lovely party. They had sandwiches and crisps, sausages and buns and biscuits and a large iced birthday cake. At the end his dad lifted his tea cup.

'Let's have a toast. To Grandma – I hope you've had a good birthday.'

'I have,' answered Grandma. 'I've had a lovely party and lots of lovely presents – and, do you know, the best present came from Jack.'

Jack looked up in astonishment.

'He gave up a whole day to be with me, and money can't buy that!' she said. She lifted her cup, 'To Jack! The best birthday present anyone could have!'

And all of the family lifted their cups and said 'To Jack!'

## Prayers

### Reflection

Lord Jesus, you show us a God who made a big difference to people. When you were on earth you saw what people needed and you did something to help them. Today you call us to do the same. Sometimes we only need to do something very small to make a difference to somebody. Help us today to see when people need us to do something to make a difference to their day.

### Litany

When we see people in trouble:

**We are called to make a difference.**

When we see people who are left out in the playground:

**We are called to make a difference.**

When we see people who are lonely:

**We are called to make a difference.**

When we see people who do not have enough to eat:

**We are called to make a difference.**

**Gospel story**

Jesus heals the blind men (Matthew 9:27–31)

Jesus was walking along one day when he heard two men shouting to him. They caught up with him and he stopped. These men were blind.

‘Be kind to us, Lord,’ they said.

‘Do you really think that I can help you?’ Jesus asked.

‘Oh yes, sir, we do,’ they answered.

Jesus stretched out his hands and touched their eyes. As he did so he said, ‘You deserve this because you have a lot of faith. You believe in me.’

As he touched their eyes and said this, they realised that their blindness had gone and they could see again. They were overjoyed.

Jesus said to them, ‘I don’t want you to tell anyone else what I’ve done. Keep it to yourselves.’

But they were so excited that they couldn’t help talking about it to everyone they met.

**Story link**

In this story, for the first time in their lives, the blind men could see. Can you imagine what a difference that made to them?

A lot of important things happened in this story – one is that Jesus stopped and listened. He could have carried on walking and ignored the men. He could have been in a hurry to get where he was going but, whether he was or not, he stopped and waited until the men caught up with him.

Another important thing is that the men really believed in him.

Sometimes we need to stop and listen to what people are saying to us if we are to be able to make a difference. And sometimes we need people to believe in us.

In ‘The talent show’, when Lauren hears that somebody believes in her, she can see how to make a difference to people a long way off.

**Today’s story**

The talent show

Lauren looked at the poster in the school hall.

***Talent show – Tuesday evening  
All money to go to Christian Aid.  
Come and show off your talent!  
Entry £1  
Tickets £2***

She scowled at the picture somebody had drawn on the top. What a stupid time to have a talent show. As if they didn’t know that people went to karate on a Tuesday night.