

Cycle C

The Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary #90

Reading I: I Kings 17: 17-24

In this first reading, we encounter the prophet Elijah, who is considered one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament. He is moved by the death of a child and the anguish of the mother's loss and wishes to respond to and enter into her pain. To feel with another person and to wish to do something for them is to have **empathy**. We are more familiar with sympathy, which is the feeling we have for another person. **Empathy**, on the other hand, allows us to enter into the other's experience. In this passage, Elijah's trust in his relationship with God drives him to act on behalf of the grieving mother and restores the child to life. God is the ultimate example of what it means to be understanding and to experience empathy.

Reading 2: Galatians 1: 11-19

This letter written by Saint Paul to the Church at Galatia does not explicitly discuss **empathy**, but it does speak to the fact that humans have a tendency to be misled. Saint Paul describes formerly persecuting the Church before he experienced a conversion. By telling this story, Saint Paul reveals that those who have been caught in error can have hope for change, and thus expresses **empathy** for those who might feel held down by their former way of living.

Gospel: Luke 7: 11-17

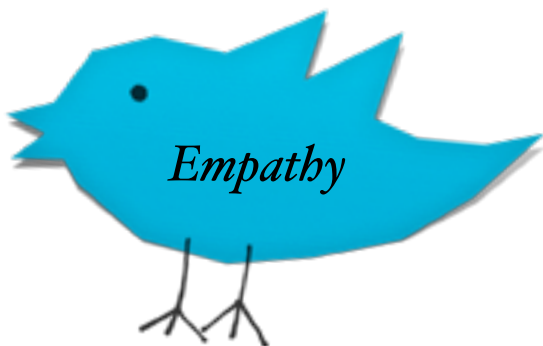
In this Gospel and in the First Reading, we encounter two mothers who are widows and who have lost their sons. For women during this time, their livelihood was dependent on the males in their lives, so their sadness is further compounded by fear. In each situation, we see a man of God being drawn through **empathy** to intervene and to bring the sons back to their mothers and to life. **Empathy** is important in forming connections with others and goes a step beyond sympathy. The mark of a true follower of Christ is going steps beyond what is normally expected to experience connections with others.



build. plant. grow.
the word this week



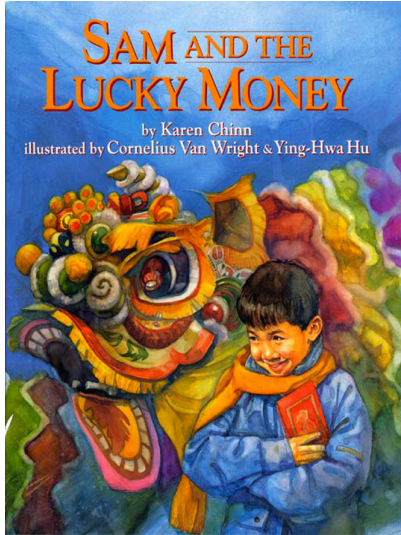
ordinary
time



lectionary
reading



children's
story



Sam and the Lucky Money

Written by Karen Chinn

Illustrated by Cornelius Van Wright & Ying-Hwa Hu

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character
education
activity

Empathy is the most mysterious transaction that the human soul can have, and it's accessible to all of us, but we have to give ourselves the opportunity to identify, to plunge ourselves in a story where we see the world from the bottom up or through another's eyes or heart.

-Sue Monk Kidd

Sam and the Lucky Money

Sam and the Lucky Money is a great story to use to introduce **empathy** to children. It is Chinese New Year in Chinatown, and young Sam has four dollars of New Year's money that he is eager to use. In the midst of the festivities and excitement in the streets, Sam accidentally steps on the foot of a homeless person who is buried in a pile of red paper. Sam is soon moved by the fact that this person is homeless and without shoes, and decides that he cannot spend his money on sweets and toys. Instead, his lucky money should be used for something really good—like helping someone else. This is truly a great story to help children see and experience what it might be like to be *in someone else's shoes*.

An Introduction to Journaling

Step One: Provide the students with material to make their own journal. Such materials could include heavy card-stock for the covers and art supplies so that each student can decorate their Personal Journal of Thinking and Doing Good Things.

Step Two: Provide the students with the following questions that they can think about and respond to in their journals with both words and pictures:

1. Sam made an important decision by himself. What kind of important decisions have you made by yourself?
2. How do you go about making decisions?
3. Where and from whom do you seek advice when making a decision? Why do you talk to that person?
4. How does God fit into your decision-making process?
5. What do you think your reaction to a homeless person would be (or has been)?

Step Three: Provide the students with red envelopes that you can make using a pattern from the Internet. Invite the students to ask their family members to contribute funds to donate to someone who is homeless or in need. Encourage the students to talk with their parents about ways that they can serve those who are homeless in their community.

Em-pa-thy, noun-the action of understanding, being aware, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the thoughts and feelings of another person.



case study

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

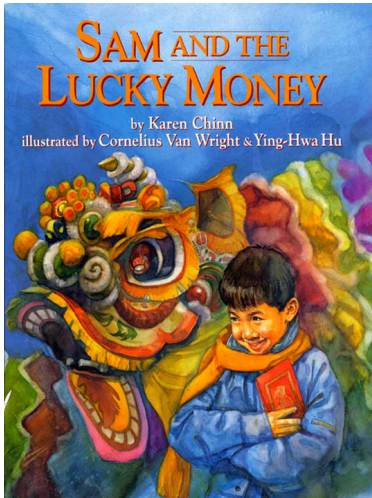
What could you do today?

Make a list of the following emotions on the right side of a piece of plain paper: Happy, Sad, Angry, Hurt, Confused, Sorry, Scared, and any other emotions you might want to include.

Directly across from the emotion word, draw a round face expressing how that face would appear if that emotion was being felt. Throughout your day, pay attention to the expressions you see on the faces of others. If you notice someone looking unhappy or sad, say a prayer to God for them, and go out of your way to say hello to them.

Look Feel Know Act

One of the most important things we can learn is to be attentive to the people around us and the things that are going on in their lives. As children of one God, we need to be able to recognize when we can be of assistance to someone who is having a difficult time. Saint Theresa of Avila once said that *God has no hands on earth but ours*. In these words, we can clearly see that **empathy** relies on us being good and faithful people. The highest form of **empathy** might be the fact of the Incarnation, for God took on flesh and blood in the person of Jesus Christ in order to experience what we experience on earth. Each day, we are presented with opportunities to be with others in a special manner, to enter into their experience and feel as they feel. Being a person of **empathy** is a true expression of living out the work of Christ in order to serve others.



The desperate plight of two mothers who have lost their sons and the responses of Elijah and Jesus illustrate the value of **empathy**. There is a parallel in the story of young Sam as he encounters the homeless, shoeless man on the streets of Chinatown. He moves outside of himself and enters into the experience of the homeless man, which leads him to spend his New Year's money on someone else and finds great happiness in doing so. **Empathy** is probably one of the great foundational elements to traveling the journey of Christian life.

This Prayer for Empathy is provided by Sadlier Publications:

Jesus,
You understood the needs of those impoverished in mind, body, or spirit, and never shunned or shamed them. May we come to recognize our own vulnerability and our longing to be healed. As we encounter our own pain, let it deepen in us a capacity to feel for others. Enlarge our souls, expand our minds, and soften our hearts towards all who suffer. In your precious name, we pray.
Amen.



**closing
tool**



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