

BLESSING – 5 MINUTE EXERCISE

When we have looked after ourselves and others properly, we are in a good place to grow and bless others. Flowers, plants, and trees flourish when they are in good soil, good light and well-watered, and that is similar to humans.

This practice invites us to imagine ourselves and our world as a fruit tree. You may or may not know, that a fruit tree is mentioned right at the start of the Bible in Chapter 2 of Genesis. It is called 'The Tree of Life'. The same tree is then mentioned in the final chapter of the Bible in the book of Revelation which imagines a picture of heaven.

A good life is like a good tree. A good tree needs three things to receive life and then give life: it needs roots, shoots, and fruit. We are going to think about each of these, starting with the fruit.

THE FRUIT – An attitude of gratitude

We are going to pass round some grapes. If you don't like grapes, then please take a slice of apple or segment of orange instead. You can also use raisins. Don't eat them until we are all ready.

Close your eyes.

PAUSE

When you are ready pop the fruit in your mouth and experience the sweet taste and texture of the fruit. Imagine you have never tasted fruit before and how wonderful it would be to taste it for the first time.

Now think of something kind which someone else has given or done to you or for you today or this week, something which felt or 'tasted' good.

Acknowledge this goodness to yourself and you might like to say thank you to God for that person and for what they did. It might be a big thing, or it might be as simple and ordinary as a grape, but just as tasty and beautiful, nonetheless.

You might want to thank this person later today if you see them or send them a message of thanks.

THE ROOT – Name a need

Next, we are going to think about roots. We are going to hand out lollipop sticks and pencils/colouring pencils. Please don't write on the sticks yet, but you can write your name or initials.

HAND OUT STICKS

Roots are essential for a tree to flourish, grow and thrive; they search for moisture and nutrients from the soil. Trees need good roots in good soil.

As you hold your stick, can you think of somebody, or something or maybe a situation of need that you know. Where have you noticed people being sad or unhappy, frustrated or angry, quiet or shy, lonely or upset today or this week? It might be a big thing or a small thing, at home or at school.

PAUSE

When you have thought of that need – the thing that somebody, something, or a situation is missing to flourish and grow, write what they need on the stick. Maybe there is a need to tidy up the cloakroom at school, or a parent needs help with washing up, or someone just needs a hug.

THE SHOOT

We are now going to imagine in our heads doing the thing that needs to be done **OR** helping to meet the need in some other way.

When could I do it, how will I do it, will I tell the person I have done it, or will I do it quietly and secretly? Imagine the person's reaction when this thing is done. It will probably feel a bit like tasting that grape for that person, they will hopefully feel a strong sense of thanks or gratitude. How might this make me feel?

PAUSE

When you are ready, 'plant' your stick in the bowl of soil at the front of the classroom. When you have done this action, please return to your place.

PAUSE

Before we end, you might want to take an action shoot from last week and write on the reverse side how you blessed the world with your action. Once you have done this, you can attach the stick to the wall to help the tree grow and flourish over the term and the year.

ENDING

You might like to finish with the following prayer of St Francis, which you could all say together or could be read out by the teacher:

The Prayer of St Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy 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.

O Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

BLESSING – ALTERNATIVE 5 MINUTE EXERCISE

(Smile, breathe and make eye contact with each person in the group)

Put a candle on top of a slice of tree trunk.

We are thinking today about flourishing and growth. Can you see the different circles of life and growth in a tree trunk as it grows and expands each year? Over many years all these small years of growth combine to build a tall, strong tree.

Like the tree trunk with its many circles, we are now going to hold people in mind starting with the centre, ourselves and then radiating out further to the class, family and friends, and then even our enemies (those that we struggle to love or like) and all creation.

PAUSE

May **I** be well and free, safe, and happy.

Hold yourself in mind, your strengths and weaknesses, your successes, and failures, but most of all your inner goodness. You are special and beautiful in a way that only you can be.

You might also like to experience God's blessing upon you. If so, these words are for you: May **I** ever experience God's grace, love and light. And may **I** be blessed as a beloved child of God.

(Stillness for 30 seconds)

May **you** be well and free, safe, and happy.

Hold each other in mind, your strengths and weaknesses, your successes, and failures, but most of all your inner goodness. You are all special and beautiful in a way that only you can be.

You might also like to pray God's blessing upon those around you. If so, these words are for you: May **you** ever experience God's grace, love and light. And may **you** be blessed as beloved children of God.

(Stillness for 30 seconds)

May my **family and friends** be well and free, safe, and happy.

Hold them in mind, their strengths and weaknesses, their successes, and failures, but most of all their inner goodness. They are special and beautiful in a way that only they can be.

You might also like to pray God's blessing upon your family and friends. If so, these words are for you: May my **family and friends** ever experience God's grace, love and light. And may my **family and friends** be blessed as beloved children of God.

(Stillness for 30 seconds)

This part is hard, but very important. If it feels too heavy, you don't have to do it.

May my **enemies** be well and free, safe, and happy.

Hold them in mind, their strengths and weaknesses, their successes, and failures, but most of all their inner goodness. Although they might be hurtful or unkind to you, they can also be special and beautiful in a way that only they can be.

You might also like to pray God's blessing upon your enemies. If so, these words are for you: May my **enemies** ever experience God's grace, love and light. And may they be blessed as beloved children of God.

(Stillness for 30 seconds)

May **all things** be well and free, and safe, peaceful and at ease.

Hold an aspect of the world, or all creation, in your mind in all its beauty and ugliness, but most of all their goodness. Creation is special and beautiful in a remarkable and powerful way.

You might also like to pray God's blessing upon the world and creation. If so, these words are for you: May **all things** ever experience God's grace, love and light. And may **all things** be blessed as God's beloved creation.

(Stillness for 30 seconds)

Amen