



Holy Orders

Reflection and Activity

The Grain of Wheat

John 12:24-26

PREPARE

Collect the materials:

- Bible
- Grains of wheat in a small bowl (can be purchased from bulk bins at most health food stores)
- Seeds to plant, such as flower seeds or vegetable seeds
- Small clay pots with potting soil, one for each participant
- Slips of paper and pens

Read the reflection in advance. The reflection including the activity will take approximately 30 minutes. To shorten the reflection, save the activity of planting the seeds for a later time.

GATHER

Gather with the members of the household. (Option: Incorporate the spiritual reflection into a meal prayer at the beginning or end of the meal. The planting activity then could be done after the meal.)

Share the following:

When a priest is preparing for his ordination, he has several different Gospel readings from which to choose for the celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. One of these Gospels involves grains of wheat.

Pass around a bowl containing grains of wheat. Ask each person to take a few of the grains.

Talk about it:

- Describe what the grain of wheat feels like.
- If we leave these grains of wheat here, in the bowl, what will happen to them? (*Nothing.*)
- In order for these grains to produce actual wheat, what do we have to do with them? (*Plant them in the ground under the soil, water them, care for them.*)
- What will happen? (*One grain of wheat will produce many grains of wheat.*)

Next, find out if anyone knows why Jesus used the grain of wheat as a symbol in the Gospels. Let participants share what they think a grain of wheat has to do with what Jesus teaches.

PROCLAIM

Ask a volunteer to read the Gospel.

Jesus said:

The time has come for the Son of Man to be given his glory. I tell you for certain that a grain of wheat that falls on the ground will never be more than one grain unless it dies. But if it dies, it will produce lots of wheat. If you love your life, you will lose it. If you give it up in this world, you will be given eternal life. If you serve me, you must go with me. My servants will be with me wherever I am. If you serve me, my Father will honor you." (John 12:23-26)

Ask the participants to tell in their own words what Jesus means. (Young children may enjoy acting out what a grain of wheat that is stubborn and refuses to be planted would be like, and what happens to a grain of wheat that is planted.)

REFLECT

Jesus uses the grain of wheat as a way to describe what we need to do, and how we need to act. We each live the Paschal Mystery – the death and resurrection of Jesus where new life comes out of pain and suffering, of going through hard times and darkness like the grain of wheat buried in the darkness under the soil. Each of us will die, but we can rise to full life in Christ. We need to break out of our hard shells, which are sometimes the hard shells of selfishness and thinking only about ourselves, and become unselfish, giving up our lives to others. We need to die to ourselves in order that we can live for others. This is what a priest is called to do in a special way during the Sacrament of Holy Orders, and it is what Jesus asks each of us to do, too, as his disciples.

ACTIVITY

Explain that each of you will plant a seed or grain, care for it and watch it grow. These plants are symbols of our dying and our rising to new life in Jesus. (Note: You can try planting the grains of wheat, but you may have more success with flower or vegetable seeds.)

PRAY

Place the pots with the seeds planted in them in a prayer corner of the home. Household members can write their own prayers on slips of paper, asking God for the courage and the strength to live unselfishly, as disciples of Jesus. The prayers can be placed alongside the pots. Family members can take quiet moments to pray the prayers throughout the days and weeks as the seeds sprout and grow.