

Prayer Spaces In Schools

Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy

27 - 29 November 2012



The 3 day Prayer Spaces event at Holy Cross Catholic Primary Academy was very successful. From our very first contact with the school we received full support from the Head Teacher as well as from its Learning Mentor who kindly made her room available to be transformed into the Prayer Space.

On day one 90 Yr 4, 5 and 6 pupils attended the Prayer Space during one and a half hour lessons focused on prayer. Following an introduction to prayer each class was divided into two groups. Whilst one half experienced the prayer space, the other half stayed in class creating a prayer plate, which had been separated into 4 segments: a Sorry segment, a Thank You segment, a Please segment and a Wow! segment.

Within the Prayer Space, the children were divided into three's and spent an average of 4 minutes at each prayer station. The Prayer Space remained open at break and lunchtime on the following 2 days, so that pupils could return voluntarily for 20/25 minutes and almost all of them came back to experience the prayer stations again.

The stations in the Prayer Space were:

1. **What Do People Say About Me?** with sand trays where children could write and wipe away the negative things they heard about themselves and choose to write positive things and what they believe God says about them.
2. **The Sorry Zone**, composed of cards where children could write their sorry prayers and hang them on the strings in the station.
3. **The Big Question**, where they were encouraged to write any question they would like to ask God on a large sheet of paper.
4. **Fizzy Forgiveness**, composed of glass water containers and fizzy vitamin tablets. At this station pupils were encouraged to think of someone they would like to forgive whilst holding the tablet in their hand and when ready, drop the tablet into the water and watch it dissolve.
5. **Connecting With God**, where children explored how God connects with them and they connect with him as they touched a plasma ball.
6. **The Bubble Tube**, representing their prayers going up to God. At this station pupils were encouraged to write their prayers on post-it notes and stick them to the bubble tube. This station, decorated with cushions and low lighting provided them with a great place to chill out.

The lesson concluded with a combined plenary session in which a puppet drama was presented explaining how Christians believe prayer works. The children were then given the opportunity to write a prayer on a luggage label and tie it to a suitcase. The prayers were very real and heart rending at times; it was a very moving experience to read them. They included:

'I am worried that I am not doing what God wants me to do.'

'Please Jesus and God help me to think more positive about myself.'

'I worry that my dad might die of smoking.'

Finally a feedback form was handed to the children so that an evaluation of the whole experience could be made. The feedback was amazingly positive and included:

Q. What was your favourite prayer station and why?

'The bubble tube because it allowed me to think about God and how he loves me.'

'When we made the plates because it made me feel honest.'

'Fizzy forgiveness because when you are stressed out and after it's gone I was happy as a honey bee!'

'My favourite part was the puppet bit; it helped me to tell God about all my worries.'

Q. Has this time changed your ideas about prayer? What did you learn?

'That God and Jesus are never bored with hearing our prayers.'

'I learnt that God is with me wherever, whenever and I can talk to him about all my troubles.'

'I've learnt that God loves you no matter what you do.'

'A lot of important messages that will stay with me forever.'

Q. Overall, what did you think of the prayer space and craft session?

'I thought that everything was really good and I expressed myself to God.'

'I think it is really good and useful. I wish you could come here every day.'

'It was brilliant, all of it. Thank you.'

'It was the best experience I have ever had.'

In conclusion, the Prayer Space at Holy Cross was not only a very positive experience for the pupils and teaching staff but also for the team of 18 volunteers drawn from Harlow's churches who had the opportunity to see young children engaging with God through prayer.