



**Prayer Service for
Weird Animals
Totally Catholic VBS 2014**

Many parishes incorporate a prayer celebration as part of their summer program, inviting the participants, their families, and the entire parish community to join in the celebration. This prayer service may be celebrated on the eve of the final day; for example, Thursday night if the last day of Vacation Bible School is on Friday, or it may be celebrated on Friday to end the VBS week. This prayer service uses readings that highlight the participants' and the larger community's faith in God's one-of-a-kind love. The VBS message of the week is God loves us no matter what!

Preparation and Supplies

- o Place an announcement in the parish bulletin inviting participant households and the entire faith community to the closing prayer celebration.
- o Determine which reflection option you will use (see below) and prepare as needed.
- o Choose songs from the suggestions below.

- o Decorate the worship space, if desired, by displaying items from the week in an appropriate spot in the gathering space. If you have chosen to participate in the Catholic Relief Services Connecting Kids to Justice project during the week, place an appropriate display in the vestibule or welcome area for people to see as they enter the gathering space.
- o Recruit and prepare or practice with the necessary ministers from among the VBS participants and adult volunteers—readers, music ministers, hospitality ministers, and so on.
- o Consider including a collection for Catholic Relief Services after the reflection, unless you have incorporated the CRS collection during the week and feel that another request is too much.

Processional Chant

All Creatures of Our God and King (Track #10 on the Sing and Play Stampede Music CD) or other songs suitable from the parish repertoire for the readings of the day.

Opening Prayer

Lord God, we have learned how much you love us this week: even when we're left out, You love us; even when we're different, You love us; even when we're afraid, You love us. We thank you for Your everlasting love. Amen.

First Reading

Instruct lector to begin by saying, “A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah” and to conclude with “The word of the Lord.” At the conclusion of the reading, prompt assembly to respond, “Thanks be to God.”

Isaiah 52:7-10

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 98:1-6

Gospel Acclamation/Alleluia

You may want to use a simple *Alleluia* call and response.

Gospel

Instruct lector to begin by saying, “A reading from the holy Gospel according to John” and to conclude with “The Gospel of the Lord.” At the conclusion of the reading, prompt assembly to respond, “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.”

John 4:1-30 – The Samaritan Woman at the Well

Reflection

Here are two options to help the participants reflect on the readings and their experience of the week.

Option One: Director Sharing

Consider including the following points in the reflection:

- Encourage the participants to remember that, God them no matter the trials and tribulations that life brings forth.
- Connect Jesus' outreach to the Samaritan Woman at the Well to our mission to love our neighbor as ourselves – to share God's love with everyone we meet.
- Challenge the participants to let their lives be different as a result of their Vacation Bible School experience, so that they may love each other as disciples of Jesus through words and actions that portray a profound trust in God's love for the world.

Option Two: Large Group Presentations

Depending on the number of VBS crews that have been part of the week, consider inviting each crew or a combination of crews to come forward to share with all those gathered a brief summary of their experience of the week:

- a. Assign each group a particular aspect of the week to share with the group—the Scripture passage for a day, a favorite station, a favorite song.

OR

- b. Invite each VBS crew to create a brief presentation that summarizes their central learning from the week—it may be one of the songs that summarizes the week for them, a brief drama that they create and share, a poster with their key thoughts and reflective images on it, one of the station days from the week, or highlights of their conversations as they discussed Connecting Kids to Justice. Issue the invitations a day or two in advance so the crews will have time to prepare their presentations.

If your physical space allows, an effective way to facilitate the large group sharing is by creating a “circle theater.” In a circle theater format, everyone has easy access to the center space and everyone can see.

Place chairs for visiting adults and family members unable to sit on the floor around the perimeter of a large circle.

Inside the circle, sit each crew on the floor, as if they are sitting in a “slice” of the circle.

Leave an open space in the center of the circle for the crews to present, as well as space between each slice to serve as aisles.

To create a prayerful tone to the sharing, select a simple song that the community can sing after each crew has shared and another crew is stepping forward to share. For example, sing the first verse from the song “All Things Bright and Beautiful” (Track # 21 on the Sing and Play Stampede Music CD)

Universal Prayer

Adapt the following for the intercessions, adding any specific intentions for the participants, their families, or the community.

After each petition, please respond with, “Loving God, Hear our prayer.”

For Church leaders, as they witness to their trust in God, we pray to the Lord.

For leaders of all countries, may the resources they steward as leaders benefit all, we pray to the Lord.

For the poor and the suffering, especially those who are hungry, we pray to the Lord.

For those who are sick and dying, for healing and trust in God’s mercy, we pray to the Lord.

For all who serve this parish as leaders, especially those who helped out with Vacation Bible School this week, we pray to the Lord.

For all those gathered here, may we proclaim with love the Good News, and walk in trust with our faith, we pray to the Lord.

Lord’s Prayer

Trusting that the Lord hears all of our prayers, let us pray the most perfect prayer. Our Father...

Sign of Peace

In a spirit of love and joy, let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Concluding Blessing

Select one of the options below:

Option One:

At the end of each blessing, we can all respond, “Amen.”

May God bless us with trusting hearts that we may witness his love with our lives. Amen.

May God bless us with courage so that we may serve all members of the Body of Christ. Amen.

May God bless us with compassion, so we might see the needs of others and respond with love. Amen.

May God bless us in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Option Two (Connected to the Saints from *Weird Animals VBS*):

At the end of each blessing, we can all respond, “Amen.”

May God bless you, like Saint Marianne Cope, who shows us how God’s love reaches all people – especially those who are suffering. Amen.

May God bless you, like Saint Joan of Arc, who shows us that God loves us even when we feel different. Amen.

May God bless you, like Saint Francis of Assisi, who shows us how God loves and blesses all of creation. Amen.

May God bless you, like Saint Bernadette Soubirous, who shows us that God’s love is miraculous. Amen.

May God bless you, like Saint Martin DePorres, who shows us that God’s love is wide and strong. Amen.

May God bless us in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Song

“All Around the World” (Track #1 on the Sing and Play Stampede Music CD)