

Children's Moment



Sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*) can make some of the deepest dives of all the animals in the ocean—down as far as 7,380 feet! While swimming in these depths, sperm whales talk to each other by making clicking sounds. This is called echolocation, and sperm whales are known to make the loudest sounds of any animal. They also have the largest brains in the animal kingdom, which is what helps them not only communicate with each other, but to have unique language dialects between different pods and clans of whales. Moreover, these big, beautiful brains show the wiring needed for empathy and love. But if their brains couldn't tell us that, their behavior certainly does.

When a sperm whale is either hurt or vulnerable, the pod will circle around that whale to form a 'marguerite formation,' which is named after the flower. The formation helps the pod to defend the whale in the center from predators and provide care. Though sometimes the whales will be seen making this formation with their tails pointing towards the whale and their heads facing outward, most of the time they begin by meeting their heads in the middle, face to face with the hurt whale.

Love is a big and complicated word to describe exactly what it means. Something that does seem clear, however, is that love is paying close attention to one another—meeting each other face to face with a caring presence. I think about the ways Joseph loved Mary and Jesus in this way. When Mary was about to give birth to Jesus, and there was no room in the inn, Joseph sought out help and creative possibilities for them to take shelter. And he did so right alongside Mary, centering her needs and vulnerabilities. He would do this again when they had to flee to Egypt after Jesus was born. Joseph knew what it meant to turn towards those he loved and follow through with loving action.

What can you lovingly notice this week about those around you? Those far away? What action might that noticing lead to? How does it feel when someone really notices you—your wants, needs, fears, hopes—with love?



"...THE GLORY OF GOD SHONE AROUND THEM..."

LUKE 2:9

Spiritual Exercise

Instructions:

This exercise is called an erasure poem or blackout poem. It is another form of a cento style poem, where your poem is created from the words provided to you. In this case, we'll be using the Gospel passage from today's readings. Someone will read through the passage, and you'll focus on noticing what words or phrases speak to you, draw you in, have energy, etc. You might want to underline or highlight these words as it is read or when you read it through again on your own. Then, look at the words you've underlined and see which ones you want to keep (or others you might want to include) to create a poem of your own. With this format, you typically keep the order of the words as is. When you are done choosing your words, you blackout all the words you are not using, so you can see clearly the new poem that has emerged (or you can write the words you are using on a separate sheet of paper if that's easier).

Luke 1:39-45-55

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.
 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?
 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."
 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for God has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is God's name.
 God's mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
 God has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
 God has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;
 God has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.
 God has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Example:

Luke 1:39-45-55

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me. For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."
 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for God has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is God's name.
 God's mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
 God has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
 God has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;
 God has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.
 God has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."



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