

The Ring, the Sandals & the Robe

Youth resource guide: Ages 12-16
#Lent2023



Introduction

In the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15, 11-32), when the younger son returns home, the Father gives him some welcome-home gifts: a Ring, a pair of Sandals, and the best Robe. In this guide, the relevance of these three objects for our Christian lives is explored through a series of activities, games and prayer moments. By becoming more aware of the gifts they have received, young participants will also be invited to make a positive difference in the lives of others by committing themselves to faith-based participation in society.

Although the activities proposed below are meant to be proposed as a half-day retreat or as a series of three meetings during Lent, youth leaders can also adapt the material proposed depending on the needs of their group.





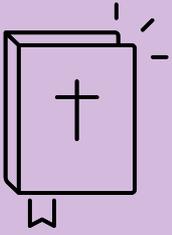
01. The Ring



Icebreaker: Shootout
Duration: 15 mins

Excellent game to get to know each other's names and introduce the theme of the ring. Get everyone in a circle, with one person in the middle of the circle. When everyone is quiet, the person in the middle calls someone's name. The pointed-at person crouches as quickly as possible. The two people standing next to the pointed-at person must quickly point at each other, shouting each other's names. The person who is last to shout the name of the other is out of the game.

Repeat till only 2 players are alive. Those 2 survivors are placed back-to-back in the middle of the room and given a sign to start walking away from each other. When they hear a ring falling, they turn around as fast as they can and shoot the other.



Biblical Explanation

Duration: 5 mins

Read Lk 15:11–32: the parable of the prodigal son, or rather of the merciful Father.

Explain that when the younger son returned home, he experienced the amazing love of his Father. His Father gave him a ring, the best robe, and a new pair of sandals. This guide will look at the significance of receiving the ring, robe and sandals.

This first section takes a closer look at the significance of the ring. In ancient times, rings often had wax seals that represented a person in authority. The ruler or owner of an estate would often give his ring to a son or trusted official, so they could speak (or write) in his name and therefore with his full authority.

In other words, with a ring comes authority, power, and responsibility. These are to be used with great care.

Before continuing with the meeting, place a ring in the middle of the room, for all to see.



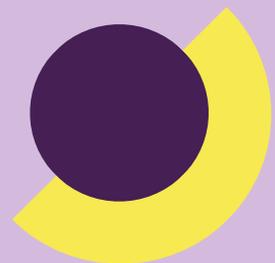


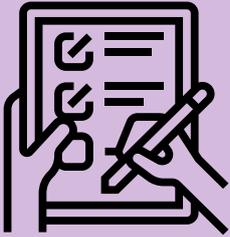
Video clip: With great power comes great responsibility

Duration: 10 mins

Watch clip from: Spiderman (2002) "With great power comes great responsibility":

Can participants think of examples in real life or in fiction, when a ring is associated with authority, power and responsibility? The obvious examples are marriage (real-life) and Lord of the Rings (fiction).



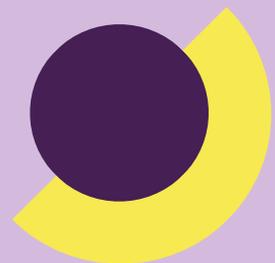


Activity: Prime minister for a day

Duration: 10 mins

Introduce this activity by brainstorming the following: If you were given the opportunity and responsibility of being prime minister for a day, how would you use this power and authority to introduce positive change in Malta? Think about decisions which would have a positive impact on people, on the environment etc.

Read Gal 4: 7 to help participants understand the authority and responsibility they have as children of God. This authority and responsibility can be used to make the world we live in, a better place.





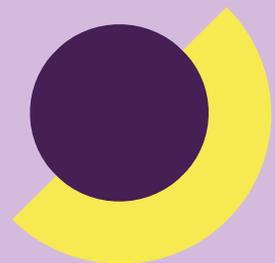
Follow-up action: Make a difference

Duration: 25 mins

Ask the young people to work in small groups. Give each group a large piece of paper and a different heading. (If there are more than 4 groups, it doesn't matter if some groups have the same heading.) The headings are:

- At home.
- At school.
- At church/youth group.
- In my local area.

Ask each group to write down all the different ways they can think of in which they could make a difference for the better in their chosen location. After 10 minutes ask each group, in turn, to share their ideas and then as a large group vote for their favourite idea for each place. If possible, the group should commit itself to carry out any of the initiatives suggested.





02. The Sandals

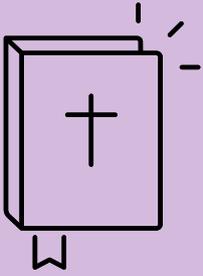


Icebreaker: Footprint

Duration: 20 mins

Divide the young people into two teams. If you have another room available, send one of the teams into a different room. Alternatively, set up some kind of screen so that the two teams can't see each other. Instruct each team to select 3 people to remove their shoes and socks and trace their feet on a piece of paper. Once this has been, bring the two teams together. Each team must guess whose footprints are on the opposing team's piece of paper.

We all leave a mark wherever we go. Sometimes it's visible and sometimes it's hidden. Discuss briefly what kind of mark (both positive and negative) young people have left behind at school, home or anywhere else they have been over the last week.



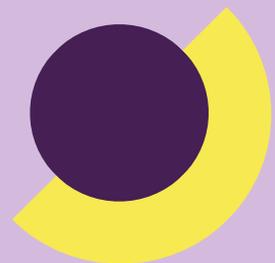
Biblical explanation: The sandals

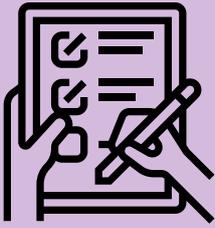
Duration: 2 mins

If the activities in this section are being done separately from The Ring and The Robe, read Lk 15:11–32.

In the time of Jesus, slaves and hired servants were not given shoes. Only sons and daughters received shoes. When the father gave his son a pair of shoes, he was saying: “You are not coming back as a hired servant or a slave. I am receiving you back into the household as my son.” Our Father welcomes us as his sons and daughters. We are no longer slaves. We are free.

Before continuing with the meeting, place a pair of sandals in the middle of the room, next to the ring, for all to see.





Activity: Imagine a slave

Duration: 15 mins

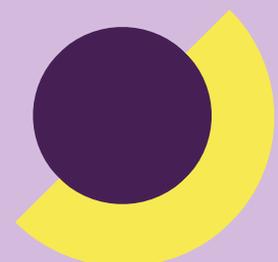
"What does a slave look like?" "What is that slave doing?" "Where do they live? Are they living in any particular period in history?" Invite participants to imagine the answers to these questions in as much detail as possible. If necessary, repeat the questions again or write them down. To get feedback from participants, ask them to put up a hand if they answered yes to any of the following questions:

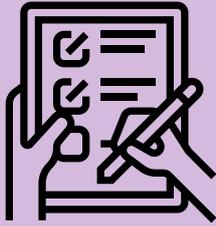
Put your hand up if you imagined a slave who was:

- A woman
- A child
- Alive today
- Doing housework, such as cooking and cleaning?
- Living in this country

Probably many would have imagined a slave of the type we watch in movies. Explain that although the slave trade was abolished more than 200 years ago, nowadays:

- 50 million people are modern slaves who cannot refuse or leave degrading situations because of poverty, threats, violence, and/or abuse of power.
- Roughly a quarter of all victims of modern slavery are children.



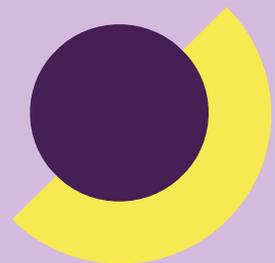


Activity: Imagine a slave Continued...

For more information click [here](#):

You might also wish to mention that in his [message](#) for the 2015 World Day of Peace, "No longer slaves, but brothers and sisters", Pope Francis mentioned the following modern-day examples of slaves:

- Workers, including children: in domestic or agricultural workplaces, or in the manufacturing or mining industry
- Those who are forced to marry
- Many migrants who are forced to work to pay off their debts and experience hunger, are deprived of freedom, robbed of their possessions, or undergo physical and sexual abuse
- Persons forced into prostitution, many of whom are children
- Those whose organs are sold
- Child soldiers
- Children who are forced to beg

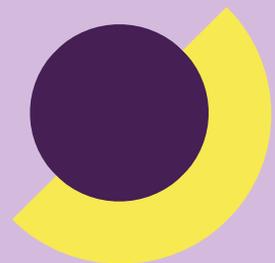




Payer moment:
Breaking the chain
Duration: 15 mins

On separate sheets of paper ask young people to write examples of modern-day slavery as listed above. Staple these sheets of paper to form a paper chain symbolizing the chain of slavery.

Settle the group down in a circle and place the chain in the middle. You might want to use background music to create a prayerful environment. A representative from the group will cut the first part of the chain whilst another young participant will share the first prayer from below. Continue until all five prayers are read out and the chain is completely broken.





Payer moment: **Breaking the chain** *Continued...*

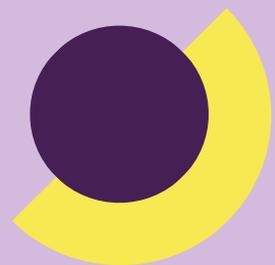
Prayer#1: We pray for people who are victims of modern-day slavery. May they find freedom from fear and harm and courage to live in hope. Let us pray.

Prayer#2: We pray for people who exploit others and inflict violence and harm. May they convert and find freedom from greed and violence. Let us pray.

Prayer#3: We pray for people who work to prevent slavery. Give them the courage and hope they need to remain faithful to their mission. Let us pray.

Prayer#4: God of compassion and mercy, you always hear the cry of the poor. You want us to be sons and daughters and no longer slaves. Forgive us for the times when we have been indifferent to the suffering of others. Let us pray.

Prayer#5: God of justice, help us understand how our individual choices impact the poor and the environment around us. Give us the wisdom we need to make choices which always respect the environment, the dignity of all workers and their right to a fair wage. Let us pray.



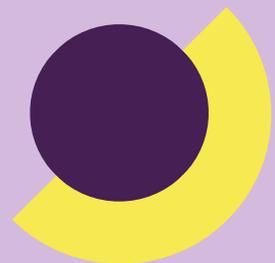


Follow-up action:
Where do my shoes come from?
Duration: Separate meeting

Watch "[The True Cost](#)" (2015).

This documentary tells the global story of the clothing industry and asks the question: "Who really pays the price for our clothing?" In this movie, we discover that whilst the price of clothes and shoes has generally decreased, the human and environmental costs of this industry have dramatically increased.

"The True Cost" challenges us to question our own shopping habits and helps persons of faith to understand how individual shopping decisions impact the poor and the environment.





03. The Robe



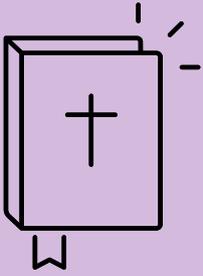
Icebreaker: Push over

Duration: 10mins

Create two lines on the ground (with chalk, a rope, or masking tape) down the centre of your meeting room, approximately two metres apart. Have the young people sit down in pairs between the two lines, back-to-back. On the shout of 'go' they must try to push the other partner over the line that their partner is facing.

After this activity is completed make the point that society emphasises that those who cross the line first are the "winners". In the Bible, things are turned upside down.

The greatest people and the real heroes aren't the ones who do stuff for themselves. Instead, the greatest people are the ones who show compassion, care for those in need and serve others by helping them cross the finishing line.



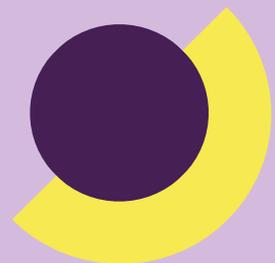
Biblical explanation: The robe

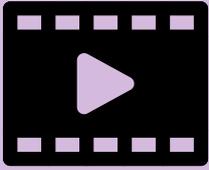
Duration: 1 min

If the activities in this section are being done separately from The Ring and The Sandals, read Lk 15:11–32.

Explain that in the parable of the prodigal son, the son received a robe - a symbol of holiness but also of compassion. The robe is a concrete sign of love, mercy as well as protection.

Before continuing with the meeting, place a robe, (cloak or jacket) in the middle of the room, next to the ring and sandals, for all to see.



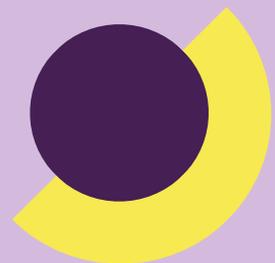


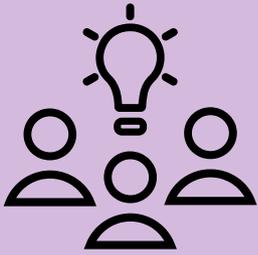
Video clip:
A hero can be anyone
Duration: 3 mins

Watch clip from "[The Dark Knight Rises](#)" (2012):

When Batman has to fly out the bomb that is set to destroy the whole of Gotham City, Commissioner Gordon knows this might be the final time he and the people of the city get to know who their saviour is. Batman then says that "a hero can be anyone. Even a man doing something as simple and reassuring as putting a coat around a little boy's shoulders to let him know that the world hadn't ended". Gordon realizes that the Batman is Bruce Wayne because he remembers putting a coat on Bruce's shoulders right after the child's parents were murdered.

Gestures and words of kindness which seem to be insignificant can make all the difference in a person's life.

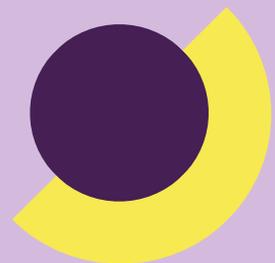


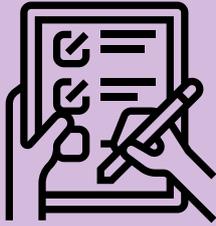


Brainstorming: **To love, in words and action** *Duration: 5 mins*

Ask the young people: “What do we understand by compassion?”
“What does it mean to show compassion?” Ask them to share some examples.

Explain that compassion can best be described as “love, in words and action”. Compassion is not just a feeling of love and sympathy. Compassion is when those feelings lead to kind words and generous action. If someone is going through a hard time, sympathy might lead you to feel sorry for them, but compassion leads you to share with them a kind word and help them in a practical way.





Activity: Circle of compassion

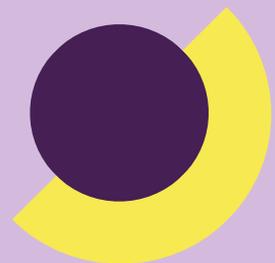
Duration: 20 mins

Divide the young people in groups of two. Ask them to think of someone who has shown compassion towards them. It might be a simple word or a gesture by a friend, a family-member, a teacher etc.

If they feel comfortable, they can share it with each other and write it down on a sticky note in the form of a thank-you note.

In the meantime, a circle representing the circle of compassion is prepared in the centre of the room/hall. This circle represents the all-embracing love of God. In God's eyes, no-one should be outside this circle. Everyone belongs and everyone is invited in. Here, you can refer to the last part of the parable of the prodigal son.

Participants are invited to place their sticky notes with their thank-you phrases inside the circle of compassion, in gratitude for the love and kindness received.





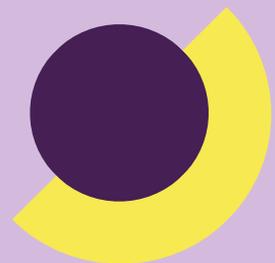
Follow-up action: Kindness pledge

Duration: 10 mins

Encourage the group to think of people they know (from church, school, neighbourhood, clubs etc) who right now might feel excluded from this circle of compassion.

How can we show compassion and kindness towards them? What can we do to demonstrate in a concrete manner God's love and nearness to someone who really needs it right now?

A card with the quote "Be kind and compassionate to one another" (Ef 4: 32) is handed out to participants. On this card, participants can write something practical they promise to do as a concrete sign of God's love and compassion towards the person they have identified. Invite them to take this card home and place it in a prominent place in their room, where it can serve as a gentle reminder of the commitment they have taken.



Acknowledgments:

<https://40acts.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/40acts-Together-Youth-Full-Resource.pdf>

"We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water the seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something and to do it well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own."
(Bishop Ken Untener)



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