

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

LEADER'S GUIDE

Fall 2023

YEAR A

August 27, 2023

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

through

November 19, 2023

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

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Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

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Sunday Readings

For your convenience, each Sunday's Lectionary readings for the Liturgy of the Word with Children can be downloaded from pflaum.com. It's as easy as 1-2-3!

1. Go to **pflaum.com/readings** for a list of Sunday readings (updated at the end of each month).
2. Click on the date you want. That Sunday's readings will open in a PDF.
3. Print or download the file.

For more about the Sunday Readings, see the Introduction to this Leader's Guide.

Weekly Gospel Reflection Videos!

Available to subscribers of *Children Celebrate!*

Visit **<http://bit.ly/40Jt8lO>** for weekly Gospel Reflection videos. These videos can be used within your Children's Liturgy of the Word program, or shared with parents and families to view at home.

Children Celebrate! Director's Manual

For an easy-to-follow Director's Manual, go to **pflaum.com/liturgy-of-the-word** and click on "Bonus Resources" and then "Program Directors." There you will find a manual that outlines practical steps for establishing a program, recruiting and training volunteers, and creating the proper environment and liturgical flow.

In addition, you will learn how to most effectively incorporate *Children Celebrate!* materials into your program. Additional resources are also suggested.

Children Celebrate! Children's Liturgy of the Word – MP3 Album

With joyful melodies, call-and-response segments, and child-friendly lyrics, John Burland's inviting liturgical pieces are perfect for Children's Liturgy of the Word programs. For example, "Go Now and Listen to God's Word" can be sung as children are dismissed from the assembly, and "Yes, Lord, I Believe" is a jubilant option for singing the Creed, helping little ones to profess their faith.

Visit **giamusic.com** and search "Children Celebrate" to order.

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This Issue's Themes

DATE	SUNDAY	THEME
August 27, 2023	21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Jesus Is the Messiah
September 3, 2023	22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Give Every Day to God
September 10, 2023	23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Jesus Calls Us to Help Others
September 17, 2023	24TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	God Wants Us to Show Mercy
September 24, 2023	25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	God's Ways Are Not Our Ways
October 1, 2023	26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Walk in the Lord's Ways
October 8, 2023	27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	God Has High Hopes for His People
October 15, 2023	28TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Come to the Lord's Banquet
October 22, 2023	29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	We Are Called to Be Good Citizens
October 29, 2023	30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Jesus Teaches About Love
November 5, 2023	31ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	God Wants Only the Best for Us
November 12, 2023	32ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Jesus Says Be Ready for Him
November 19, 2023	33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	God Wants Us to Do Our Best

Using *Children Celebrate!*

Children Celebrate! is a complete step-by-step resource for celebrating the Liturgy of the Word with Children. The two components of *Children Celebrate!* are this Leader's Guide and the Children's Leaflets, a book of tear-out, take-home sheets.

LEADER'S GUIDE (each week has two parts)

I. Preparation provides the leader with information about the week's Scripture readings and how they relate to children today. Its elements are the following:

- **Today's Readings** cites the exact Scripture readings you will be using that day. (Remember, these readings do not always match the readings chosen for the adults. See more about the

readings on page 6.) A theme sets the tone of that day's liturgy.

- **Prepare with Prayer** helps center you on the task at hand, which is not only helping children hear and understand God's Word but also hearing and understanding God's Word **through** the children.
- **Scripture Background** helps you understand the readings and prepare to break open the Word.
- **Prepare the Meeting Space** gives you suggestions for enhancing the environment for that day's celebration. Review this section a few days before the liturgy.

- **Suggested Music** provides suggestions for appropriate songs during the liturgy. Information on where to find each piece of suggested music is on page 62.
- **Children's Connections** explains each week's theme and Scripture message as it applies to children today.
- **More About...** provides Church teaching about a topic that is related to this week's liturgy.
- **Using the Children's Leaflet** provides brief background information about the take-home sheet.
- **Activity** provides a reproduction of the take-home sheet. Solutions to puzzles are shown as needed.

II. The Liturgy of the Word is a ready-made liturgy specifically written for that week's readings and theme. Its elements are the following:

- **Gathering** helps the children settle into their places. Playing appropriate background music or singing a song provides a transition into an attitude of prayer.
- **Collect** sets the tone for the worship experience.
- **Focus Statements** for each of the readings help you give the children a key idea to listen for and to help them better understand the theme of the readings.
- **Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation** provide liturgically appropriate responses for the children to use.
- **Homily** gives you starter ideas for interesting, creative, and relevant reflections on the Gospel.
- **Profession of Faith** is a simple and interactive declaration of what we believe as Catholics.
- **Prayer of the Faithful** are the prayers for the needs of the world, the Church, and the community. These are often a common first step for children into spontaneous prayer and can be powerful moments for children.

- **Return to Assembly** provides the leader with a cue to prepare the children to rejoin the main assembly and to remind them to take home a Children's Leaflet.

CHILDREN'S LEAFLETS (each leaflet is two-sided)

Front Side

- **Today's Readings** gives the Scripture citations for that Sunday's liturgy.
- **We Pray** is a short prayer for children based on the week's theme.
- **The Word of God This Week** is a summary of the day's Gospel story.



Back Side

- **Activity** provides an entertaining way to reinforce the Gospel message.
- **Faith Focus** highlights how the Gospel message can pertain to the family.
- **Family Activity** provides practical suggestions to families on how to put the Gospel into action at home.



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION VIDEOS

- **How to access the videos:** Visit pflaum.com/fall2023 to view the videos for this quarter (loaded monthly).
- **What's included?** Each weekly video includes a Gospel Reflection, Saint Spotlight, Closing Prayer, and Reflection Question.
- **Promote:** Share these videos with those assisting with Children's Liturgy of the Word for use during your program, as well as with parents and families.

Introduction

What Is Liturgy of the Word with Children?

Liturgy of the Word with Children is a worship experience geared especially for children. It mirrors the worship experience of the larger community, with a style that is engaging and interactive. Jesus himself recognized that children have a pure spirituality, and he made them the primary spiritual model for all believers.

Liturgy of the Word with Children is not formal religious education, nor is it intended to be a substitute for attendance at religious education sessions. Rather, it should be considered a partner to religious education programs. Both are important for a child's spiritual development, just as continuing faith formation and growth in spirituality are important for adults.

The Word of God has a message that is as relevant and fitting for children as it is for adults. The children, however, often fail to hear the message simply because the adult vocabulary is beyond their comprehension. Liturgy of the Word with Children offers an experience for the children to hear Scripture in words they understand and to share their own understanding of God's Word.

Celebrating the Liturgy of the Word in this way is an empowering experience, giving children a foundation for understanding and appreciating Scripture. Over several years, the children not only become comfortable with hearing and discussing God's Word but also gain an understanding of and appreciation for their liturgical heritage as Catholics.

When and How Do the Children Leave the Assembly?

The celebration of the Liturgy of the Word with Children follows the same structure as the Liturgy of the Word for the entire assembly. In fact, it begins with the Introductory Rites, which are celebrated in the large assembly, where the children are seated with their families.

After the Introductory Rites, the presider invites any children wishing to participate to join the leader and proceed to the worship space set aside for them. They return after the Prayer of the Faithful to celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist with the entire community.

What About the Readings?

The readings in the children's Lectionary sometimes differ from those used in the adult Lectionary. When planning liturgies to be used with children, the Church allows some flexibility in the number and choice of readings on Sundays and feast days.

According to the *Directory for Masses with Children*, "If three or even two readings appointed on Sundays or weekdays can be understood by children only with difficulty, it is permissible to read two or only one of them, but the reading of the Gospel should never be omitted" (Chapter III, No. 42). In addition, because of the difficulty some children may have in understanding certain verses, it is sometimes possible to omit one or another verse from the reading. (For a complete reading of the directives regarding selection of readings, see the *Directory for Masses with Children*, Chapter III, Nos. 41–47.)

In *Children Celebrate!* we follow the readings from the *Lectionary for Masses with Children*, which is approved for use in all dioceses of the United States by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. We determine themes and make suggestions for each Sunday's liturgy based on these readings. For this reason, it is important that you check each week's citations as listed in this Leader's Guide before finalizing your plans for that Sunday's celebration.

Preview the Readings

If you do not have access to a children's Lectionary while you prepare your liturgy, you have three other options for previewing the readings for each Sunday.

1 Go to our website (pflaum.com/readings), click on the date you need, and print or download the readings.

2 The *Lectionary for Masses with Children* uses readings from the Old Testament and Book of Psalms. A select number of the refrains for the Responsorial Psalms are taken from the *Contemporary English Version* © 1991 by the American Bible Society. Readings from the New Testament are taken from the *Contemporary English Version, Bible for Today's Family: New Testament* © 1991 by the American Bible Society. The CEV can be purchased at stores and at americanbible.org.

3 Go to americanbible.org. Scroll over BIBLE RESOURCES. Scroll down and click on BIBLE SEARCH. Under the search box, click on Search Options. Select CEV Contemporary English Version (US Version). Enter the book, chapter, and verses that you need, such as Luke 15:11–32.

Where Do I Begin?

Your first step to prepare a Sunday session should be to pray for guidance. “Prepare with Prayer” opens each week's background material. It will help you begin to focus your mind and open your heart to God's message. Remain in prayer as long as you like.

Read the Scripture and background material in their entirety. Although the story may be familiar, you may see it with new eyes when challenged to lead a reflection on it. The background material will give you an idea of the social and historical context behind the Scripture.

Gather and write down your thoughts for the reflection. Look at them and meditate on them for a

while. Certain themes or ideas will come through. Create an outline for your reflection based on these ideas.

Be sure to read through the Prepare the Meeting Space and The Liturgy of the Word sections well in advance so that you are not taken by surprise by any preparations you should have made or items you will need on hand. Allow plenty of time to set up and prepare before the session.

What Else Should I Know?

LITURGICAL COLORS

This edition of *Children Celebrate!* covers Pentecost Sunday through the Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time. For Pentecost Sunday, the liturgical color is red, representing fire, a symbol of the Holy Spirit. We celebrate the Most Holy Trinity and the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi) with the color white or gold. Green is the color for Ordinary Time to indicate this period for growing in faith. Use the liturgical colors on the table where you place the Lectionary or in other elements you use in your worship area.

MOVEMENT

Introduce movement wherever you feel it could be appropriate in the liturgy. Young muscles cry out to be used often, and this physical need causes the restlessness that some adults find irritating. Even the simple act of lifting their arms in prayer or carrying some small object to the front of the room can give children a refreshing but orderly break from being in one position for too long.

Trust Yourself

Finally, remember that *Children Celebrate!* is a complete resource that you can trust to be liturgically sound while also being creative. Nevertheless, you are the leader and you must be comfortable with what you want to do each week. Feel free to use (and trust) your own ideas as well.

There is no limit to what God can work through each of us. Your time with these children will have God's blessing and will be immeasurably fruitful. Enjoy!

We Are One in Christ

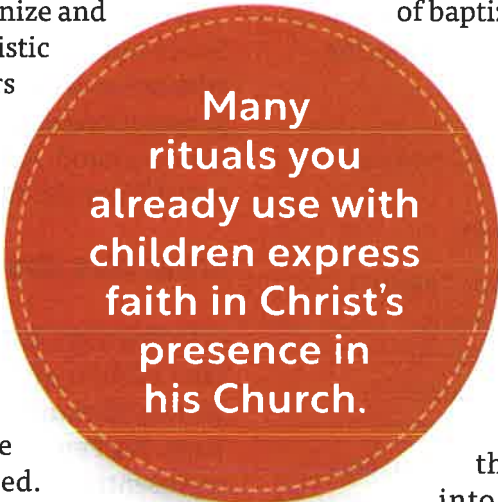
At every celebration of the Eucharist, the living Christ is truly present in the gathering of his people around him. This means that no one has to wait for the proclamation of the Word of God or the consecration of the bread and wine to recognize and acclaim his presence in the Eucharistic liturgy. The minute the worshipers take their places and begin the opening hymn, Christ lives in and among them —present in his singing, praying Church.

In the earliest Christian liturgies, Christ's close identification with his people was expressed in multiple symbols of oneness. At one table, one loaf of bread was blessed and broken, and one cup of wine was raised and blessed. Believers seated at the table tore off pieces of the one loaf for themselves as they passed the bread around the table and then drank from a common cup. There were no "individual servings" in any modern sense of the word. Even when Eucharistic gatherings later grew larger and multiple tables were set in the host family's villa, Christians continued to share communal loaves and cups of wine. When liturgical music was called for, participants shunned polyphonic compositions, preferring to sing in one voice as a symbol of their oneness in Christ.

Emphasize Oneness

Are there ways of bringing home to children Christ's presence in and among them, in their oneness as a group, when they gather for worship? Usually it is best simply to let the liturgy's symbols speak for themselves. Many rituals you already use with children express faith in Christ's presence in his Church: forming a circle, joining hands, giving a sign of peace, singing together, reciting together, joining in a communal procession, accompanying hymns with liturgical movements performed in unison, extending the hands in blessing over a person in the assembly who is celebrating a special day. (Both hands should be used to avoid an eerie resemblance to a Nazi salute.)

When incorporated into a liturgy, these practices generally need no additional explanation, although occasionally you may wish to say, "We are doing this because we know Christ is present in us, in his family of baptized Christians."



Many rituals you already use with children express faith in Christ's presence in his Church.

Gathering Activity

On occasion, design a gathering activity that emphasizes the idea of Christ present in his people gathered together. Here are two suggestions:

1 Find online or in a magazine a large picture of Christ. Paste it onto a piece of stiff paper. After the paste dries, cut up the picture into simple brick-shaped pieces, as many pieces as there are children in your group on a typical Sunday. Starting with the top row of "bricks," consecutively number each one on the back, going from left to right. Continue numbering each row of bricks until you have given each one a different number.

At the beginning of the liturgy, give each child a brick. Have the group gather around an empty table or a vacant spot on the floor. Explain that whenever we come together at Mass, we come together as the one Body of Christ. We are no longer our own separate selves, but special, needed parts of the Body of Christ.

Then ask whoever has puzzle piece number one to step forward and place that piece in the top left corner of the vacant space. Continue calling off numbers until the whole picture of Christ is formed. (Let the older children help the younger children identify the numbers on their pieces.)

When the picture is complete, have the children join hands while you offer a simple prayer such as, "Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for making each of us a part of you when we were baptized. And thank you for being with us now — in and among us, as your singing, praying Church." Then sing a simple hymn that everyone knows.

2 As a slight variation on the above activity, have the children gather around a blank sheet of paper. Explain in these or similar words: "Whenever we come together to worship God, we come as members of Christ's body. To symbolize this truth of our faith, we will draw a picture of Christ by having each person draw one small part of it."

Then give a large crayon or felt-tip marker to a child and ask him or her to draw a circle for Christ's head. After that have each child, one by one, add to the picture Christ's eyes, nose, mouth, ears, eyebrows, mustache, beard, hair, neck, shoulders, robe, and other features. Be sure to give the simplest tasks to the youngest children.

While the picture is being completed, allow for a few giggles, but also point out that how pretty the picture looks is not important. What is important is recognizing that each person brings his or her own special something to the picture to help make it complete. Then close the activity with a short prayer and a hymn, as explained above.

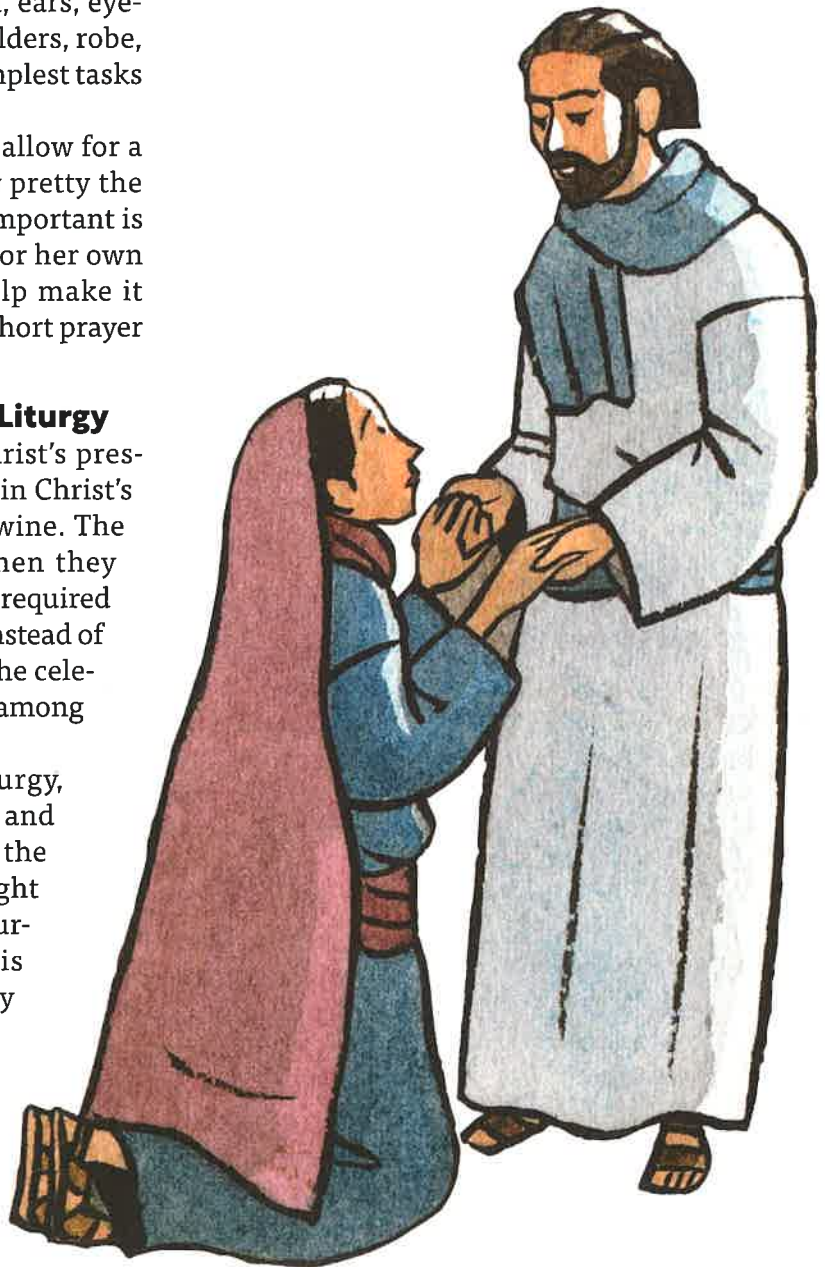
Christ's Presence Throughout the Liturgy

Some might wonder if emphasizing Christ's presence in his people diminishes our belief in Christ's presence in the consecrated bread and wine. The Vatican II Fathers did not think so when they reformed the liturgy. It is one reason they required the celebrant to begin facing the people, instead of the back altar, during Mass. In this way, the celebrant acknowledges that Christ is present among his people.

There is an artistic quality to the liturgy, for it builds to a climax when the bread and wine are consecrated and distributed to the assembly. As dramatic as the climax might be, however, it cannot stand alone as a liturgical act. Christ presents himself to his people in forms of bread and wine only because he already lives in them by virtue of their Baptism. With the gifts of his Body and Blood, Christ wishes to sustain and strengthen his life in them.

For Further Reading

Michael J. Taylor, S.J., ed. *The Sacraments: Readings in Contemporary Sacramental Theology*. New York: Alba House, 1981.



Today's Readings

Romans 11:33–36
Psalm 138:1–2a, 2bc
and 3, 6 and 8cde
Matthew 16:13–205

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a potted plant or vase of fresh flowers

For use during the Homily, have available:

- ☐ a rock
- ☐ a set of keys
- ☐ a picture of the current pope, if possible

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"I Am the Way" (*Seeds CD-2, Track #19*) or **"Upon This Rock"** (*Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #21*)

PSALM:

"On the Day I Am Called" (*Rory Cooney. OCP*)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (*Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24*)

Jesus Is the Messiah

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

*You have looked deep
into my heart, Lord,
and you know all about me.
You know when I am resting
or when I am working,
and from heaven
you discover my thoughts.*

PSALM 139:1-2

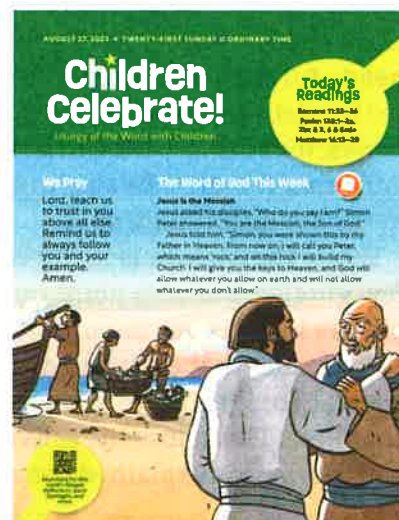
Scripture Background

Today's First Reading is a hymn of praise capping a lofty philosophical explanation of God's eternal plan to save Jew and Gentile alike. The hymn asserts that such a wonderful plan could only have come from a God infinite in wisdom.

The Gospel celebrates another work of God's wisdom: a Church destined to last to the end of time. The Church endures partly because of its unity around apostolic authority residing in the pope and bishops. Catholics regard the pope as the legitimate heir of specific responsibilities first assigned to Peter the Apostle.

When Jesus asked who people said he was, the question was so easy that any apostle could readily answer it. But when Jesus asked the apostles who they thought he was, all fell silent except Peter. Peter alone saw that Jesus was not just another prophet in a long line of prophets, but someone totally singular in history—he long-awaited Messiah.

Jesus' subsequent praise of Peter included three distinct assertions:



1. Peter knew the truth neither because he'd diligently sought it, nor because he'd been told it by someone else. Rather, his insight came as a direct gift from God.
2. This gift made him strong enough to become the foundation of the Church to be born of the Holy Spirit.
3. Peter would have the final authority in the Church on earth. It would be his unique task to preserve the purity of Christ's message and the unity of his Church.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

It is sad when Catholics grow up and say, "I see no difference between the Catholic Church and other churches." They have failed to grasp the uniqueness of the Catholic identity. If they haven't been unusually resistant to learning about their faith, this means that somehow, along the way, their parents and teachers have failed them.

Today's Gospel offers a good opportunity to help children claim one of the distinguishing features of their Catholic faith — the unique role that Catholics believe the pope has in the Church founded by Jesus.

Certainly it is not necessary for children to know all the finer points of the papacy, such as the difference between *ex cathedra* pronouncements and other papal statements; the manner in which the pope, as bishop of Rome, shares authority with other Catholic bishops; and so on. It is sufficient simply that children see the pope as Peter's successor and Peter as an apostle unique among the Twelve for his special leadership role.

In other areas of study, children routinely learn to identify and classify. They learn what makes creatures fish or fowl, mammals or reptiles. They learn what makes numbers odd or even, rational or irrational. How much more important that they learn what makes them Catholic!

THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps children learn that Jesus chose Saint Peter to lead the Church,

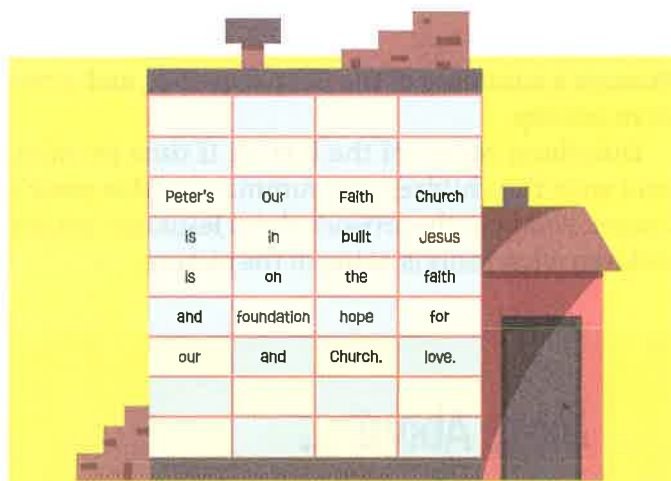
through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork about Jesus and ask the children what Jesus is doing in the picture.

More About ...

The Pope

- "The Pope ... 'is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful' " (#882).
- " 'The college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head' " (#883).
- " 'The college of bishops exercises power over the universal Church in a solemn manner in an ecumenical council' " (#884). But a council has authority only if confirmed or recognized by the pope.
- " 'This college, in so far as it is composed of many members, is the expression of the variety and universality of the People of God; and of the unity of the flock of Christ, in so far as it is assembled under one head' " (#885).
- Each bishop has a special responsibility to care for the people of his diocese, the poor, those who are persecuted for their faith, and those who serve as missionaries around the world. (See #886.)



Leaflet Activity

A building game is suggested for families this week to emphasize the importance of a good foundation of faith. The children's activity further emphasizes this same message.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Invite the children to be seated. Tell them that today's liturgy reminds us that it is important to build a foundation of faith in order for the Church to last forever. Ask that the children remain seated and listen to a recording of the songs "I Am the Way" and/or "Upon This Rock."

Collect

LEADER: Please be seated for prayer. Your response today is: "The Church will last forever." Jesus built his Church on rock. The Church will last forever.

CHILDREN: The Church will last forever.

LEADER: That rock was Saint Peter the Apostle. The Church will last forever.

CHILDREN: The Church will last forever.

LEADER: We are the Church and we stand on solid rock. The Church will last forever.

CHILDREN: The Church will last forever.

LEADER: Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we are your Church, and you are our builder. You have made us strong to last long. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

CHILDREN: Amen.

Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: Who can tell me the name of someone who is wise? [Wait for a few answers.] As wise as these people are, there is someone else who is still wiser. That person is God, and today's First Reading reminds us that anyone on earth who is wise received that wisdom as a gift from God.

At the end of the reading:

LEADER: The word of the Lord.

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning the psalm, sing or announce the suggested response.

LEADER: Lord, your love is eternal.

CHILDREN: Lord, your love is eternal.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: Can anyone tell me who Jesus is? [Wait for a few answers.] Today's Gospel is about the apostle who was first to understand that Jesus was the Messiah sent from heaven. Listen carefully to hear which apostle it was.

LEADER: The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

At the end of the reading:

LEADER: The Gospel of the Lord.

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

- Pick up the rock and ask, "If you were building a house, would you build it on rock like this? Why?" Explain that Jesus built his Church on the one apostle who had the most wisdom and faith, which was the foundation needed for the Church to last forever.
- Pick up the keys and say, "Jesus gave Peter the keys of the kingdom. What do keys do?" [unlock doors and gates] "In our world today, who usually has keys?" [people in charge of things] Explain that after Jesus went to Heaven, Peter was left in charge of Jesus' Church on earth. Peter was the Church's first pope.
- Now point to the picture of the current pope and say, "Here is our pope today. He continues Peter's work. Do you know his name?"

Note that we respect our pope and pray for him at every liturgy because Jesus respected Peter, the first pope, and often prayed for him, too.

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand as we profess our faith, just as Peter did the day Jesus asked his apostles who they thought he was. Please respond to the questions with, "I do." Do you believe that God, the Father, is the living God from whom all good things come?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe that Jesus sent his Spirit to his Church, to make it holy and to keep it strong?

CHILDREN: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: Jesus promised to keep his Church strong for all time. We are that Church, and we are made strong in faith by Jesus himself. Therefore let us pray with confidence to God our Father. Your response to each petition will be, "O God, hear our prayer."

LEADER: For our Holy Father, the pope, and all the

leaders and teachers of our Church, that their faith will be strong like Saint Peter's, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: O God, hear our prayer.

LEADER: For the people of our parish, that we will keep alive the faith handed down to us by Saint Peter and the Apostles, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: O God, hear our prayer.

LEADER: For the people of our town (city, county), that any who are far from God will turn to Jesus and see that he is the Messiah, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: O God, hear our prayer.

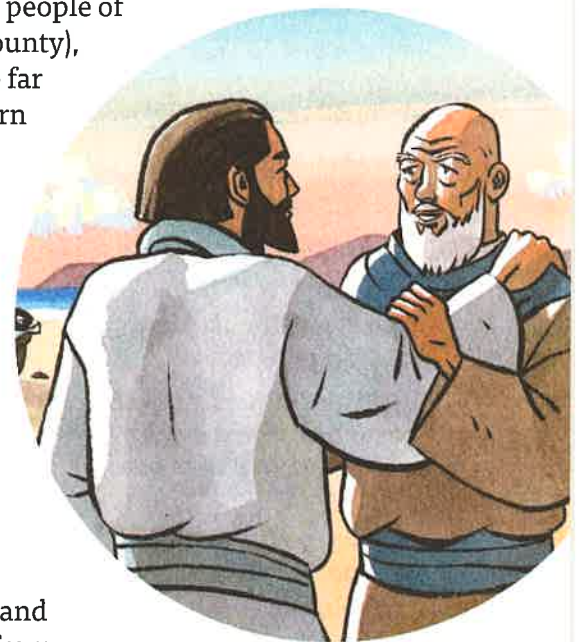
Invite the children to add their own petitions.

LEADER: Lord God, all wisdom and goodness come from you. Thank you for making us strong and unified in the faith that you handed down to us through Peter and the Apostles. May you be praised forever and ever.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. Remind them to take a leaflet home and share it with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.



Today's Readings

Jeremiah 20:7–9

Psalms 63:1abc, 2–3, 4–5

Romans 12:1–2

Matthew 16:21–25

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a potted plant or vase of fresh flowers

Have ready for use during the Gathering activity:

- ☐ an assortment of birthday candles or tea-light candles, matches or a utility lighter
- ☐ cake or pie pan (filled with sand if birthday candles are used).

For use during the Homily, have ready to read aloud a copy of Jeremiah 20:11.

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"I Am the Way" (Seeds CD-2, Track #19) or **"Come and Follow Me"** (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #14)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)

Give Every Day to God

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

You have helped me, and I sing happy songs in the shadow of your wings. I stay close to you, and your powerful arm supports me. (PSALM 63:7–8)

Scripture Background

"But if you give up your life for me, you will find it" (Matthew 16:25). These words of Jesus from today's Gospel promise that following him will entail self-sacrifice, but self-realization will be the ultimate result. The other two readings in today's liturgy support this thought.

The First Reading is a lament that forms part of a longer prayer that ends in an expression of trust in God. Jeremiah complains that God has tricked him into prophesying for him; perhaps the prophet feels deceived because he had been told in his original call that he would have both good news and bad news to deliver to the people: "You will tell them of doom and destruction, and of rising and rebuilding again" (Jeremiah 1:10). Yet, so far Jeremiah has only been given bad news to impart, and it is bringing him all kinds of trouble. He regrets answering his prophetic call, yet admits that he cannot hold God's message within him, either, for it burns like a fire. He is having a very real experience of knowing the pain of serving God without yet feeling many of the benefits.

The reading from Romans contains the first two verses of two chapters whose overall purpose is to convey the moral duties of every Christian. In a nutshell, these involve changing the world in which one lives through the faithful daily practice of loving others out of love for God. The believer's very way of life is to be like a burnt offering sacrificed in God's holy temple.



In the Gospel, Peter offends Jesus for wanting the glory of God's kingdom without making the required sacrifices for it. This sort of thinking was what Dietrich Bonhoeffer had in mind when he warned his fellow Christians in Nazi Germany that there is no such thing as "cheap grace." If we want a share in God's life, we need to be willing to surrender our own lives in God's service.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

Today's liturgy for children focuses on the symbol of a burning candle. How well the children understand the day's readings may well depend on how effectively you use this symbol, which is paired with the thought that praying the Morning Offering every day is a good way to make of oneself a candle spreading God's light and warmth in the world.

You might wish to send home with every child a copy of the Children's Daily Offering Prayer to pray every morning when they wake up. Those too young to read can ask a parent or older brother or sister to pray it with them. There is also a version of the Morning Offering that adults around the world pray

every day. So that you can compare it with the children's version, here are the words, courtesy of the Apostleship of Prayer:

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart: the salvation of souls, reparation for sin, and the reunion of all Christians. I offer them for the intentions of our bishops and of all Apostles of Prayer, and in particular for those recommended by our Holy Father this month.

THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps children learn how to follow Jesus, through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

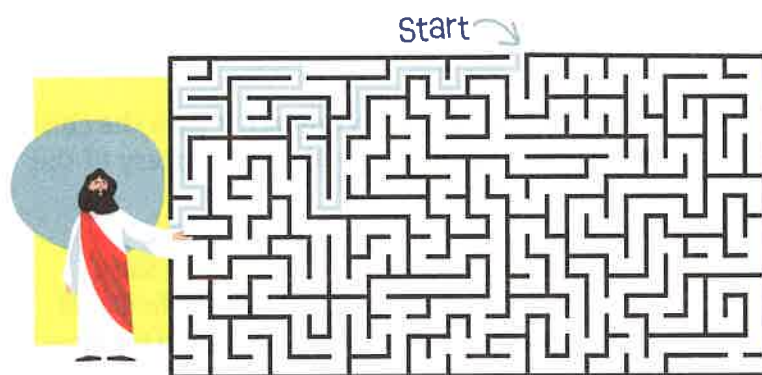
Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork about Jesus and ask the children what Jesus is doing in the picture.

More About ...

The Morning Offering and the Apostleship of Prayer

The prayer we know today as the Morning Offering started with a few young French Jesuits who formed a group called the Apostleship of Prayer in 1844. Eager for the day they could begin working on the missions, these seminarians were encouraged to start serving God immediately through their daily prayers. "Be apostles now, apostles of prayer!" Father Francis X. Gautrelet told them.

Still in existence today, the Apostleship exists "to encourage Christians to make a daily offering of themselves to the Lord for the coming of God's Kingdom and for the Holy Father's monthly intentions." Since the 1800s, popes have given the members intentions to remember in their prayers. Pope Francis has asked for prayers for the sick, respect for women, and Christian unity. To learn more about the Apostleship of Prayer, go to popesprayerusa.net.



Leaflet Activity

As summer wanes, families are encouraged to reflect on their seasonal activities. Children find their way through a maze that leads them to Jesus.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Ask the children to choose a candle to put into the pan. Turn off the electric lights and have them stand or sit in a circle around the pan as you light each candle. During the lighting, everyone sings and/or listens to a recording of the songs “I Am the Way” or “Come and Follow Me.”

Opening Prayer

LEADER: A good way to start every day is by saying a prayer called the Morning Offering. In it, you promise to live your day for God. Please repeat each line of the prayer after I say it.

LEADER: Heavenly Father, I offer you this day

CHILDREN: Heavenly Father, I offer you this day

LEADER: All that I think and do and say

CHILDREN: All that I think and do and say

LEADER: Uniting it with what was done

CHILDREN: Uniting it with what was done

LEADER: By Jesus Christ, your only Son. Amen.

CHILDREN: By Jesus Christ, your only Son. Amen.*

**“CHILDREN’S DAILY OFFERING PRAYER” COURTESY OF THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: In today’s First Reading, Jeremiah the prophet is feeling bad because doing God’s work is causing him a lot of trouble, so he tells God exactly how he feels about it.

Read Jeremiah 20:7–9. Then say, “The word of the Lord.”

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Second Reading

LEADER: In today’s Second Reading, Saint Paul says we need to let God change the way we think. Then we will know how to do everything that pleases him. *Read Romans 12:1–2. Then say, “The word of the Lord.”*

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: In today’s Gospel, Peter gets into an argument with Jesus because he does not understand that we must give of ourselves to do God’s work in the world.

The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: *Read Matthew 16:21–25. Then say, “The Gospel of the Lord.”*

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ. Ask the children to be seated.

Homily

Build a Homily on these ideas:

- In today’s Opening Prayer, we offered God all that we think and do and say today. When we give God our lives each day, we promise to accept all the joys and sufferings that go along with serving God.

- In our First Reading, Jeremiah is trying his best to accept the sufferings that come with being God's prophet. He shows us that we can be completely honest with God in our prayers, even when we are upset. God understands and can help us. (Read Jeremiah 20:11 to show that God helped Jeremiah accept his sufferings.)
- In our Second Reading, Saint Paul says God is good. We know this by looking at the way Jesus lived and died for us. We serve God best when we do the same, burning up our lives for God the way a candle burns up its wax to give others light.
- In today's Gospel, Jesus says he is willing to go to his death serving God, even if it is death on a Cross. He says that we, too, must be willing to accept hardships in our lives if we want to be his followers.

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith. Respond to each question with the words, "I do." Do you believe in God, the Father, who is all-good and all-wise?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, who freely picked up his Cross to save the world from sin?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in God, the Holy Spirit, who spoke through Jeremiah and all the other prophets who suffered for the sake of God's Word?

CHILDREN: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: As people called to spread the Light of Christ throughout the world, let us pray for the needs of all God's people. Your response to each petition will be, "O God, hear our prayer." For our Holy Father, the pope, and all the leaders and teachers of the Church, that they will be courageous in preaching the Gospel, let us pray to the Lord:

CHILDREN: O God, hear our prayer.

LEADER: For all the people of the world who have not yet heard the Good News that God loves them, let us pray to the Lord:

CHILDREN: O God, hear our prayer.

Leader: For all the people of our parish, that we will remember to live every day in love and light, let us pray to the Lord:

CHILDREN: O God, hear our prayer.

Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Heavenly Father, you have called us to give our lives in love to you and to all our brothers and sisters on earth. Send us the fire of your Holy Spirit, that we may shine like candles with a holy light all the days of our lives. This we ask through Christ our Lord

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.



Today's Readings

Ezekiel 33:7–9

Psalm 95:1–2,6–7abcd,
7e–9

Romans 13:8–10

Matthew 18:15–17

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a potted plant or vase of fresh flowers

Have ready for use during the Gathering activity:

- ☐ pen and paper

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"Gather Together" (*Seeds CD-2, Track #1*) or **"Yes Lord, I Believe"** (*Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #26*)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (*Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24*)



Jesus Calls Us to Help Others

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

Love the LORD and hate evil! If you obey and do right, a light will show you the way and fill you with happiness. You are the LORD's people! So celebrate and praise the only God.
(PSALM 97:10, 11–12)

Scripture Background

The Babylonian exile is the backdrop for today's First Reading. After repeatedly warning his fellow Israelites to give up their sins or face imminent punishment, Ezekiel has seen his countrymen conquered in war and sent in chains to Babylon. They may feel like a people with nothing left to lose, but Ezekiel reminds them that next they could lose their lives if they or their descendants born in exile continue sinning.

Nowadays when we read God's warning that the wicked "will die because of their sins," we think mostly of the spiritual death that comes from falling out of a state of grace, which is reversible if we repent.

For Ezekiel's original audience, however, death meant only one thing: the final end to the fullness of physical human existence in this world. What followed would be, at best, a dim, shadowy half-life in a sad world of disembodied spirits—no resurrection of the body, no Heaven for the blessed or hell for the damned.

When Saint Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, the Jewish members of his mixed Jewish and Gentile audience were well-versed in 613 *specific regulations* that comprised the Law. So what were Gentile converts to Christianity supposed to do? Were they supposed to begin learning and practicing all 613 Jewish commandments, in addition to those of Jesus?



Saint Paul's answer was that Gentiles were doing enough if they simply followed the Great Commandment that Jesus had preached: Love God and love your neighbor. Jews, on the other hand, needed to realize that Jesus had expanded the traditional Jewish definition of *neighbor* to include every living human being, not just those belonging to one's own family, tribe, or nation.

In today's Gospel, Jesus lays out a plan for keeping wrongdoing at a minimum among his followers. Grave sins committed by fellow Christians should not be ignored, but they should be addressed in discreet and respectful ways. Only after these are tried should a final, far more painful, and public measure be used: excommunication.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

Any teased or bullied child who is defended by a schoolmate will remember the experience for the rest of his or her life. And already in the moment, the child's hurt feelings are salved and sense of self-worth reaffirmed.

Why aren't wrongdoers confronted more often? While older children may worry about losing popularity or peer acceptance if they take a stand, younger children often simply lack the skills.

Today's Homily offers children a simple five-step approach for dealing with other children who have said or done something deliberately hurtful.

The Homily ends with a brief role-playing activity that makes use of one of the situations mentioned by children during the Gathering activity. Examples the children provide will probably include things such as bullying or name-calling, ruining or taking someone else's property, or refusing to let another child sit at the same lunch table or join in on a game.

Remind the group that sometimes a wrongdoer will ignore a reasonable request for a change of behavior. When that happens, a child should tell a teacher, parent, or other trusted adult about the problem. This is not tattling; it is peacemaking. As Saint Paul VI said long ago, "If you want peace, work for justice."

More About ...

Jesus vs. His Enemies

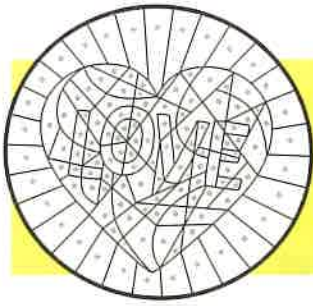
Much has been written about Jesus' nonviolence. These are examples often cited:

- When Jesus cleansed the Temple, he was committing an act of civil disobedience. Not only did he use a relatively harmless method to defend the pious poor against dishonest temple merchants, but he also modeled nonviolent resistance for countrymen who favored a violent overthrow of the hated Romans. (See Matthew 21:12–17; Mark 11:15–19; Luke 19:45–48; John 2:13–22.)
- After his arrest, Jesus doubtless practiced his own advice to turn the other cheek. Know, however, his original intent, which could be expressed like this: "Do this so that you can look your aggressor straight in the eye and let him know you are a human being, too, and deserve to be treated with dignity."
- Yet Jesus did not suffer in silence. When the Temple guard struck him, he demanded to know, "If I have done something wrong, say so. But if not, why did you hit me?" (John 18:23)

THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps children learn Jesus' teaching about helping others, through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.



Leaflet Activity

Families decide together to do something special this week for someone who needs a pick-me-up. Children follow the color-coded puzzle to discover what Jesus wants us to do.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Invite the children to be seated. Tell them that today's liturgy reminds us that, even as children, we sometimes need to stand up to wrongdoers. Then without naming any names, ask them to share times when another child in some way hurt them or hurt someone they knew. Perhaps the other child was:

- a brother, sister, or cousin
- a neighbor boy or girl
- another student in school
- another child in daycare

As the children speak, take notes to consult later during the Homily. Conclude the activity by saying you will speak more about these examples later. Then ask them to bow their heads for the Opening Prayer.

Opening Prayer

LEADER: Our response to each short prayer will be, "Lord, have mercy." Lord, you are our God, and we are your people. Lord, have mercy.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: We are the sheep you keep in your own pasture. Lord, have mercy.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: When we listen to your voice, we are kept safe from harm. Lord, have mercy.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: If you saw someone about to fall off a cliff, you'd shout out a warning, right? In today's First Reading, God tells his prophet Ezekiel to pass on a warning, too.

Read Ezekiel 33:7-9. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken.

Before beginning, sing or announce the response.

LEADER: If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts.

CHILDREN: If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts.

LEADER: Read Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7abcd, 7e-9.

Second Reading

LEADER: In our Second Reading, Saint Paul reminds us of the commandment to love others as much as we love ourselves.

Read Romans 13:8-10. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us how to treat someone who has done something wrong. The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: Read Matthew 18:15-17. Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Explain that Jesus does not expect us to stand by quietly and say nothing whenever a wrong is done. He expects us to speak up. Nevertheless, we need to do this in the right way, so that we make the problem better, not worse:

- First, take a deep breath and say a quick prayer. For example, "Lord Jesus, what's happening here is wrong. Help me take a stand."
- Second, try to speak with the person alone. If others are present, point to a nearby spot and say, "Can we go over there and talk?" If the person refuses, say what you have to say exactly where you are.
- Third, say exactly what you didn't like about the person's words or actions. For example, "I didn't like it when you called me a dumbbell in class today just because I missed a question."
- Fourth, say what you want from the person in the future. For example, "Please don't call me that name again."
- Fifth, show that you want to keep the peace between you. If the person is a friend, say something like, "Even though I don't like what you said, I hope we still can be friends." If the person is not a friend, say, "We may not be friends, but that's no reason we can't be nice to each other."

Sum up the five steps: pause to pray, try to get the person alone, say what you didn't like, say what you want from now on, and express your wish for peace.

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith. Respond to each question with the words, "I do." Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, who gave us the Ten Commandments?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who gave us the Great Commandments to love God completely and to love our neighbors as ourselves?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of love living within us and helping us keep God's commands?

CHILDREN: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: Now that we have stood up for our faith, let us also stand up for everyone in the world who needs our prayers. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord." O Lord, deliver from evil our Holy Father, the pope, and all Church leaders around the world, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: O Lord, deliver from evil all the war-torn nations of the world, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: O Lord, deliver from evil all homeless families across our own country, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Heavenly Father, you created the world to be a place of justice and peace for all. Help us stand up for what's right, so that sin will be defeated and your kingdom will come for everyone. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.

Today's Readings

Sirach 28:2–5, 6b–7
 Psalm 103:1–2, 3–4, 11–12
 Romans 14:7–9
 Matthew 18:21–35

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a potted plant or vase of fresh flowers

Have ready for use during the Gathering activity:

- ☐ an assortment of birthday candles or tea-light candles, matches or a utility lighter
- ☐ cake or pie pan (filled with sand if birthday candles are used).

For use during the Homily, have ready to read aloud a copy of Jeremiah 20:11.

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"I Am the Way" (Seeds CD-2, Track #19) or **"Come and Follow Me"** (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #14)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)

God Wants Us to Show Mercy

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

All of you thousands who serve and obey God, come and praise your LORD!
 (PSALM 103:21)

Scripture Background

In *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (1990), Father Benedict T. Viviano, O.P., says that today's Gospel makes more vivid the Lord's Prayer when it pleads, "Forgive us our sins, O Lord, as we forgive those who have sinned against us."

This petition strongly echoes the thought behind Sirach 28:2 in our First Reading: "If you forgive your friends when they mistreat you, your prayers will be answered and your sins forgiven."

"Alive or dead, we still belong to the Lord," Saint Paul says in verse 8 of today's Second Reading. He rightly can say this because our sins have been forgiven through Christ's saving death and resurrection. Without Christ's sacrifice, we could not belong to God because we would still belong to sin. In verse 10 (which is not included in today's reading) Saint Paul goes on to ask, "Why do you criticize other followers of the Lord? Why do you look down on them?" He condemns judging others because in fact no one but Christ is without sin.

The parable Jesus tells in today's Gospel can be divided into three acts. In the first, the king forgives an exorbitant debt that a royal official owes him. In the second, that same official ruthlessly tries to collect a debt that another member of court owes him, and he is reported to the king. In the third act, the king withdraws his forgiveness of the official and sends him away to be punished.

The parable's message could not be clearer: If you want to be forgiven, extend forgiveness to others.



CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

Want a unique way to make today's Gospel vivid for kids? If you have approximately an hour to spare, go online and turn the parable from today's Gospel into a downloadable comic strip. At makebeliefscomix.com simply follow the website's instructions to retell Jesus' parable in these 12 panels:

1. Angry lion asks, "How much do you owe me?"
2. Weeping crocodile answers, "50 million, Your Highness, but I don't have it."
3. Angry lion responds, "Then away with you and all your family! You will be sold as SLAVES."
4. Surprised crocodile says, "Please don't! I'll pay you back every cent I owe."
5. Smiling lion says, "Oh, all right. You don't have to pay me back now. In fact, you don't have to pay me back EVER. Go in peace, my servant." Smiling crocodile answers, "Thank you, thank you, my king!"
6. Smiling, waving frog says, "Hey there, Croc!" Sly, unsmiling Croc says, "Hey, Froggy. Say, don't you owe me a boatload of bucks? I WANT IT NOW. Give it to me or I'll have you thrown in jail!"
7. Froggy, horrified and grabbing his throat, says, "Please, Croc! Have pity on me and I will pay you back!"
8. Sneering crocodile says, "Absolutely not. Wait until I call the police. HELP! POLICE!"
9. Sad frog is approached by angry dog folding his arms. Dog says, "All right, Buddy. You're coming with me."
10. With open mouths and horrified faces, a rat, a cat, and a rabbit say, "Your Highness, we came to tell you about Croc."
11. Angry lion roars, "Croc, you're evil! Didn't you think you should show pity to someone else, as I did to you? GUARDS! Arrest him and beat him!"
12. Weeping crocodile stands before robed alien

More About ...

Sirach and Jesus' Teachings

It's not hard to find passages in Sirach that found new life in the teachings of Christ. Consider just two examples.

- "My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials" (2:1). This theme also characterizes the entire Gospel of Mark, which asserts that the road to glory is open only to those willing to carry their crosses.
- "My son, conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts" (3:17). These words echo a theme of Mary's Magnificat found in the Gospel of Luke.

raising his finger. Alien says, "RIGHT AWAY, Your Highness!"

THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps them know about Jesus' teaching about forgiveness through a summary of the Gospel, and a creative activity.

Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork about the king and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

**GOD FORGIVES ME
AND I MUST
SHOW
FORGIVENESS
TO OTHERS.**

Leaflet Activity

Families make a poster to keep track of forgiveness given and received this week. The children complete a word puzzle to discover the message of today's Gospel.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Have the children stand in a circle. Show them a small wrapped gift and tell them it has an important message inside. You are going to play a game with it. While everyone sings along with a recorded song, you are going to pass the gift from person to person until the music stops. The child holding the gift at that point gets to open it and read the message aloud (or choose someone else to read it). After the child shares the gift, ask all to bow their heads for the Opening Prayer.

Opening Prayer

LEADER: Our response to each short prayer will be, "How great is your love, O Lord. Show us your love, and we will share it with others. How great is your love, O Lord."

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: Forgive us our sins, and we will forgive the sins of others. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: Overlook our faults, and we will overlook the faults of others. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: In today's First Reading, a wise man reminds us that God's forgiveness is a gift meant to be shared. Read Sirach 28:2-5, 6b-7. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning, sing or announce the response.

LEADER: The Lord is kind and merciful.

CHILDREN: The Lord is kind and merciful.

LEADER: Read Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 11-12.

Second Reading

LEADER: In our Second Reading, Saint Paul reminds us that we belong to God, and people who belong to God are called to love and forgive the way God does. Read Romans 14:7-9. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a story about a king and a royal official. The king stands for God, and the official stands for all sinners. Remember that as you find out what happens to the official. The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: Read Matthew 18:21-35. Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Lead a dialogue with the group using these ideas and questions:

- Today Jesus' story sends a clear message that's almost like the Golden Rule. Does anyone know what the Golden Rule says? (Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.)
- Today what Jesus says is, "Do unto others as you would have God do unto you." How many of you want God to forgive you when you do something bad? (Pause for a show of hands.) Then you have to forgive others when they do something bad to you.
- Last week we talked a little about mean kids. We said there are five steps you can take whenever somebody is mean to you. Does anyone remember what they are? (Pause to pray; get the person alone; say what you didn't like; say what you want in the future; express your wish for peace.)
- And if that doesn't make the mean kid stop, what else can you do? (Tell a trusted adult.)
- Did you notice there were characters in today's Gospel who did exactly that — they reported a bully to the king?

Offer to retell the story so that the group can watch for the part where a few characters get together to stop someone's bullying. Use the comic strip you prepared to retell the story. Follow the script given in Children's Connections.

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith. Respond to each question with the words, "I do." Do you believe in God the Father, almighty and all-loving, who gives us the gift of forgiveness so that we can share it with others?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who spent his entire earthly life preaching and practicing the forgiveness of sins?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, whose gift of forgiveness comes to us through the Church and the sacraments?

CHILDREN: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: Let us pray that God's love will transform us, our world, and our Church throughout the world. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord." Guide in love and truth our Holy Father, the pope, and all the leaders of the Church, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Guide in love and truth everyone in our parish, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Guide in love and truth all those who have difficulty forgiving others, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Heavenly Father, you sent us your only Son to forgive us our sins and grant us fullness of life. Open our hearts so that we freely may receive your gifts, and open our hands so that we freely may share them with others. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.



Today's Readings

Isaiah 55:6–9

Psalms 145:2–3, 8–9, 17–18

Matthew 20:1–16a

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a potted plant or vase of fresh flowers

Have ready for use during the Gathering activity:

- ☐ a wallet filled with play \$1 bills or a bag of foil-wrapped chocolate coins.

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"God Loves Me" (Seeds CD-2, Track #15) or **"The Great Commandment"** (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #18)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)



God's Ways Are Not Our Ways

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

I will praise you, my God and King, and always honor your name. Each generation will announce to the next your wonderful and powerful deeds.
(PSALM 145:1, 4)

Scripture Background

"Turn to the LORD!" are the words that begin today's First Reading from the Book of Isaiah. Although this Old Testament expression ordinarily was a summons to the Temple, here it is a call to consider your immediate circumstances. If you are honest, you must admit to some moral weakness or another—some habitual sin.

A forgiving God, however, is always within speaking distance, ready to forgive your sins if you ask with a sincere heart. God is not like human beings who persist in holding a grudge against those who wrong them. Rather, God always remains near to those who call upon him. Yet God does this while remaining mysteriously transcendent. "Just as the Heavens are higher than the earth, my thoughts and my ways are higher than yours," today's reading concludes. This paradox is a perfect lead-in for today's Gospel.

Jesus tells a parable that begins in a true-to-life setting, yet ends with more than one unexpected twist. It was common for first-century Palestinian employers, like the man in today's story, to go to the marketplace to hire workers. It was where job-seekers always gathered.

Nevertheless, the employer in Jesus' story breaks the mold in a few key ways. Throughout the day, he repeatedly visits the marketplace to hire workers, instead of just once. He goes there at 6 a.m., 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m., and again at 5 p.m. What real-life employer would do that? Only



someone more interested in relieving the ranks of the unemployed than in running his agribusiness!

While not believable as a human being, the man is spot-on as a symbol of God. God does not judge by externals alone but sees into the heart. Perhaps the employer paid all workers generously because all demonstrated a desire to work—in other words, he gave them credit for their good intentions and not simply the number of hours they had worked.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

The parable in today's Gospel shocked its original audience. To communicate some of its power to children, begin your Homily with a short demonstration. Ask four kids who can count to stand up and count off one to four. Tell them that their number signifies the number of hours they have spent picking grapes for you.

Then take the play money from the display, go to the number four child, ask how many hours he or she has worked, and give that child four \$1 coins or bills. Make a big show of this. Have the child hold out a hand as you count out each coin or bill slowly and loudly. Continue giving the same amount to each of the other children, even though the others have worked fewer than four hours.

Then ask what the group thinks of what they just saw. If anyone calls you unfair, say that's exactly what the people of Jesus' day thought when they heard him tell today's parable. Then take back the play money, return it to the display, let the four children be seated, and proceed as usual with the suggested Homily.

Here is another demonstration to consider using as part of your Homily. Pick two children similar in age and size to do a *walking* race from one side of the room to another. One child, however, must walk while balancing, hands-free, a magazine or pillow on his or her head. The one who is not weighed down of course will win the race. Explain that sin weighs you down and makes you clumsy in your efforts to serve God. If you get rid of sin to better answer God's call, though, God will respect you and reward you for your efforts.

THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps them learn Jesus' teaching about God's ways, through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork about the man who hired the workers and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

More About ...

Alternate Gathering Activity

In a hallway or open space separate from the worship area, invite the children to spread apart while facing you. Then hold an inflated, tied balloon in one hand and a book in the other. With the balloon held significantly higher than the book, ask which item is higher. After the children answer, tell them you are going to play a game called "What's Higher?"

Appoint an older child to be "IT." That child will stand in front of the group and say, "Teacher has a question" before tapping the balloon toward the group volleyball-style. Any child near the flying balloon may tap it back while saying, "What's the question?" "IT" catches and holds onto the returned balloon while you ask one of the "What's Higher?" questions listed in today's Gathering activity. If the child who asked, "What's the question?" answers correctly, he or she becomes "IT" for the next round.

F	A	I	R	N	E	S	S	X	E
X	Y	V	I	N	E	Y	Q	T	M
G	M	S	E	Q	A	A	R	D	A
C	R	Q	P	Y	G	O	O	Y	S
F	N	A	X	W	R	D	Z	B	T
A	F	S	U	O	R	E	N	E	G
M	O	R	N	C	G	E	R	O	Z
N	L	K	I	N	Y	F	X	R	N
W	O	R	K	W	O	N	E	O	C
K	I	N	G	D	Q	M	C	F	Y

Leaflet Activity

Within families “fairness” is often challenged. Who got the biggest piece of cake? Why is her chore easier than mine? This week, mealtime is a time to discuss one another’s feelings about any unfairness they feel within the family. There’s a slight “twist” to this week’s puzzle for the children.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Invite the children to be seated. Tell them you are going to play a speed game. You will quickly call out lots of questions and you want them to answer as quickly as they can. The questions will be about one subject—what’s higher?

What’s higher:

- my shoulders or my waist?
- a basement or an attic?
- a hill or a mountain?
- a birdhouse or a doghouse?
- a cloud or a star?
- a flying flag or a cruising jet?
- basketball goal or a golf hole?
- a floor fan or a ceiling fan?

When the game is over, explain why you played it. In today’s liturgy, Isaiah says that God’s ways are *higher* than our ways—as high as the Heavens are above the earth. Whenever we sin, we need to remember that and lift up our hearts to God to ask for forgiveness.

Opening Prayer

LEADER: Let us now take a moment to bow our heads, remember our sins, and ask for God’s forgiveness. (Pause.) Our response to each short prayer will be, “How great is your love, O Lord.” Your ways are not our ways. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: Your thoughts are not our thoughts. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: You are merciful and forgiving. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: In today’s First Reading, Isaiah reminds us that, unlike people who sometimes hold grudges, God is *always* ready to forgive our sins.

Read Isaiah 55:6–9. Then say, “The word of the Lord.”

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning, sing or announce the response.

LEADER: The Lord is near to all who call on him.

CHILDREN: The Lord is near to all who call on him.

LEADER: *Read Psalm 145:2–3, 8–9, 17–18.*

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: In today’s Gospel, Jesus tells a story about a man who needs workers to go pick grapes for him.

LEADER: The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: Read Matthew 20:1-16a. Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Conduct the payday demonstration explained in Children's Connections, then continue with these thoughts:

- Remember what Isaiah said in the First Reading: God's ways are higher than our ways. What that really means is that God's ways are better than our ways. That's because God knows more, sees more, and loves more than we do.
- Now think of the vineyard owner in today's Gospel. He gives a full day's pay to all his workers, whether they worked only one hour or all day long. He didn't care how many hours each person had worked. What mattered was that each person was willing to work, and each person said "yes" when asked.
- The owner in the story represents God, and the workers represent all of us. God wants us to work for him, but sometimes our sins hold us up and we show up late for work. The people with the fewest sins always get to work the fastest, while those with more sins show up later.
- This story is just Jesus' way of saying that God doesn't judge us the way other human beings judge us. God sees inside our hearts and knows the sins we have conquered in order to come to him. Instead of condemning us for being slow to answer his call, God gives us credit for answering it. God sees inside our hearts and sees the goodness of our sorrow for our sins—not just the goodness of our deeds.
- And that is something to celebrate!

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith. Respond to each question with the words, "I do." Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, who forgives us our sins?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who saved us from sin's power over us?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life, who strengthens us in goodness and faith?

CHILDREN: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: As children of a Heavenly Father who forgives us our sins time and time again, let us turn to him in prayer. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord." Because you are generous, O God, strengthen in faith our Holy Father, the pope, and all the leaders of the Church throughout the world, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Because you are generous, O God, strengthen in faith everyone who lives in a country harmed by hunger, disease, or war, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Because you are generous, O God, strengthen in faith all of us here whenever we are tempted to sin, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Heavenly Father, we stand here today to praise you and thank you for your great goodness. May your generosity to all your children inspire us to be generous with one another. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.

Today's Readings

Ezekiel 18:25–28
Psalm 25:4–5, 6–7, 8–9
Philippians 2:1–5
Matthew 21:28–32a

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a potted plant or vase of fresh flowers
- ☐ a portrait of Jesus
- ☐ a portrait of Spiderman

Have ready for use during the Gathering activity:

- ☐ paper and pen

Have ready for use during the Homily:

- ☐ two stuffed animals
- ☐ a ball

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"LOVE God" (Seeds CD-2, Track #21) or **"Yes Lord, I Believe"** (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #26)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)

Walk in the Lord's Ways

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

I offer you my heart, LORD God, and I trust you. (PSALM 25:1-2)

Scripture Background

Today's First Reading comes from an Old Testament book written during the sixth century B.C. for Jews sent into exile after losing a war with Babylon. The Jews long had derived their identity from the land given them by God, the Temple in Jerusalem, and the ancient tribal ties they shared with one another. Suddenly they found themselves severed from their roots and scattered among strangers in a strange land.

As surely as their ancient hero Samson had lost his physical strength after being shorn of his hair, they felt stripped of their spiritual strength. The prophet Ezekiel, however, assured them that as long as they obeyed God's law, they remained God's children. And even when they sinned, God was always ready to take them back if they repented.

In the Second Reading, Saint Paul focuses on the makings of an authentic Christian, as well as an authentic Christian community. In short, a Christian is anyone who conscientiously models his or her life on that of Christ, and a Christian community is any gathering of Christians made one by the Holy Spirit living among them.

What makes a true Israelite is the subject of the parable in today's Gospel. Jesus told this story in reply to challenges he had just received from the chief priests and the elders, whose lack of faith was keeping them from recognizing Jesus' divine origins. Despite their fine education and the strictness of their daily regimen, Jesus warned, they were actually putting themselves further from God's heart than Israel's many notorious sinners who had been transformed by the Gospel he was preaching.



Still today, this parable comes as a stern rebuke to believers who think they already know and do all that is required for personal holiness. In truth, there is always *more* to know and to do—for becoming a true Christian is the work of a lifetime.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

In today's Gathering activity, children will compare their knowledge of a popular superhero with their knowledge of Jesus. It will be done to underscore the importance of getting to know the Lord better than we know story characters..

As the children brainstorm, feel free to supply clues that keep the exercise moving along. For example, you might ask about each person's family members or his special abilities. Here are just a few of the descriptive phrases that can be used for the two heroes.

Jesus is a/an:

- adopted son of Joseph and son of Mary
- member of the Holy Trinity and the Holy Family
- enemy of Satan
- Nazarene
- friend of James, John, Peter, Mary Magdalene
- teacher
- healer
- miracle worker
- water-walker
- man of courage

Spiderman is a/an:

- adopted son of Aunt May and Uncle Ben
- member of the Parker family
- enemy of Dr. Octopus, Green Goblin, Venom, and others
- New Yorker
- friend of Harry, Flash, Mary Jane
- science whiz
- crime fighter
- superhero
- wall-climber
- man of courage

Today's Homily will begin with a brief story that you will enact on a bare tabletop by using two stuffed animals and a ball. Name one animal Blue and give it a blue kerchief to wear. Name the other Red and give it a red kerchief. (You can use any two colors.) Show the two pushing, kicking, or nosing a ball back and forth in a little game of catch.

Then call out in a high-pitched voice, "Kids, it's time for dinner. Come and eat!" Have Blue answer, "Right away, Mommy!" and Red answer, "Not already!"

More About ...

The Babylonian Exile, 587–537 B.C.

Exiling a conquered nation was not uncommon in the ancient world. It was a way both to solidify the gains achieved in war and to maintain control over a subjugated nation. Typically, only the upper classes were sent away — those with the most to gain by organizing a counter-revolt. Peasants, on the other hand, were allowed to remain behind and continue plowing fields, herding sheep, and dressing vines as usual.

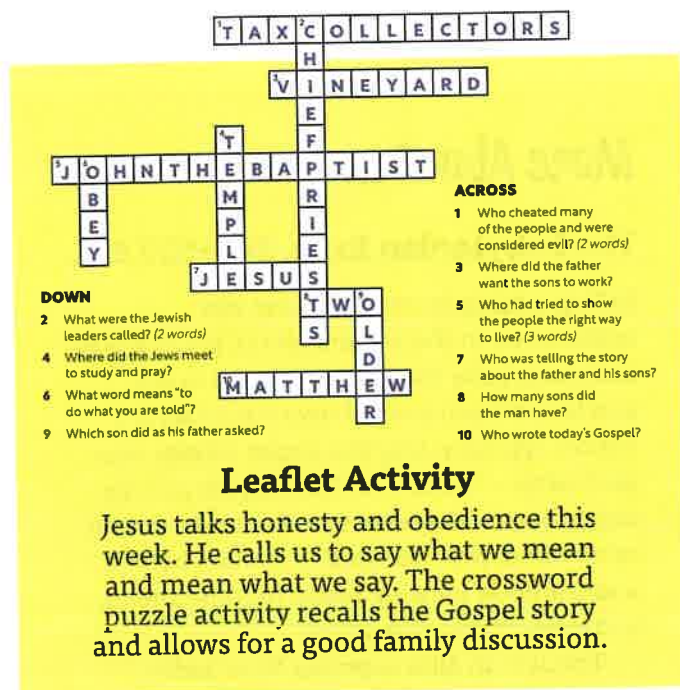
The Jewish elite expelled from Judah in 587 B.C. faced a stern crisis of faith. They wondered if God had abandoned them forever. They were not sure how to continue communing with God apart from Jerusalem and its temple. Urged on by prophets like Ezekiel, they became "people of the Book." By gathering every Sabbath to sing hymns and share Scripture in the various Babylonian towns where they found themselves, they forged a new kind of worship that defines Judaism to this day.

I want to play some more." Then show Red changing his mind and leaving to go inside, and show Blue changing her mind and staying to play some more with the ball. Conclude by asking the children a question similar to the one Jesus asks in today's Gospel: "Which of these two obeyed their mother?"

CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps them learn Jesus' teaching about how to get to Heaven, through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork about the son in the vineyard and ask the children what the son is doing in the picture.



THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Invite the children to be seated in the worship space. Point out the two portraits on display and ask the group who they think they know better: Jesus or Spiderman. Accept without comment whatever answer they provide; then propose a test. Offer to tally all the different ways they can complete the sentence, "Jesus is a ____." Then do the same with "Spiderman is a ____." In the end, see which list is bigger. Then ask:

- Which person will you see one day in Heaven?
- Which one, therefore, is more important to know?

Note that while Jesus was and is a real person; Spiderman is just a character in a make-believe story. We come together every Sunday so that we can get to know Jesus better and love him more. Knowing him and loving him are the most important things we can do with our lives. To emphasize this point, take away from the display the Spiderman portrait, leaving only the portrait of Jesus there.

Opening Prayer

LEADER: Please bow your heads for the Opening Prayer. Our response to each short prayer will be, "How great is your love, O Lord." Show us your love,

and we will share it with others. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: Forgive us our sins, and we will forgive the sins of others. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: Overlook our faults, and we will overlook the faults of others. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: In today's First Reading, the prophet Ezekiel reminds us of two things: God wants us to be faithful to the very end of our lives, and whenever we are not faithful, God wants us to return to him with sorrow for our sins.

Read Ezekiel 18:25–28. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning, sing or announce the response.

LEADER: Remember your mercies, O Lord.

CHILDREN: Remember your mercies, O Lord.

LEADER: Read Psalm 25:4–5, 6–7, 8–9.

Second Reading

LEADER: The way we live with each other and care for each other shows how much faith we have in God. Saint Paul talks about this in today's Second Reading.

Read Philippians 2:1–5. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a story about two brothers.

LEADER: The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: Read Matthew 21:28–32. Then say,
“The Gospel of the Lord.”

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

After retelling the parable from today’s Gospel with stuffed animals and a ball, elicit the answer that Red was the one who actually obeyed his mother. His words indicated that he would not follow his mother’s direction, but his actions proved otherwise.

- During the time of Jesus, everybody looked up to people like the chief priests and thought they would surely go to Heaven, but they looked down on people like tax collectors and thought they would never get into Heaven. After all, the chief priests seemed to have all the answers about God. But many tax collectors cheated people out of their money.
- That’s why Jesus really surprised the chief priests when he told them that they would have a hard time getting into Heaven. Jesus even said that the tax collectors would get into Heaven before the chief priests. Why? Because the chief priests didn’t believe in Jesus and obey his commands, while some tax collectors did.
- In the end, you see, it doesn’t matter if you sound good. It doesn’t matter if everyone thinks you’re good. What matters is if you are good—and you prove that by your actions which show that you believe in Jesus and do what he says.

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith. Respond to each question with the words, “I do.” Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, who made you for lives of loving service?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who taught you by word and example how to live?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in God, the Holy Spirit, who makes you one with the Church and guides you along right paths?

CHILDREN: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: Because God has asked that we care about other people besides just ourselves, let us pray for the many needs of our Church and world. Our response to each petition will be, “Hear us, O Lord.” Guide in your truth the pope and other leaders of the Church, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Heal the wounds of the injured in all war-torn lands, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Grant peace and love to the members of our families, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Heavenly Father, wherever your Holy Spirit dwells, there is happiness and peace. May that same Holy Spirit live in our hearts and shine in our lives, that others may see in us how great is your love. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven’t already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week’s Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.

Today's Readings

Isaiah 5:1–7
Psalm 80:8 & 11,
14de–15ab & 19
Philippians 4:6–9
Matthew 21:33–43

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a 3-D model of a biblical vineyard (or a picture or drawing of one)

If you lack the time or materials to assemble the 3-D model, have on hand a dry-erase board and a dry-erase marker or a felt-tip pen and a sheet of paper.

Have ready for use during the Gathering activity:

- ☐ hill ringed with rows of grapevines
- ☐ a stone wall around the hill
- ☐ beyond the wall, a pit for stomping the grapes
- ☐ at the top of the hill, a watchtower

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"I Am the Way" (Seeds CD-2, Track #19) or **"Come and Follow Me"** (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #14)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)

God Has High Hopes for His People

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

In a language unknown to me, I heard someone say: "I lifted the burden from your shoulder and took the heavy basket from your hands."

(PSALM 81:5–6)

Scripture Background

Today's First Reading comes from the prophet Isaiah, whose "Song about a Vineyard" is actually a parable warning his countrymen of the future that awaits them if they continue in their sinful ways. The First Reading is a lament that forms part of a longer prayer that ends in an expression of trust in God. Jeremiah complains that God has tricked him into prophesying for him; perhaps the prophet feels deceived because he had been told in his original call that he would have both good news and bad news to deliver to the people: "You will tell them of doom and destruction, and of rising and rebuilding again" (Jeremiah 1:10).

Their offenses have been detailed in the three preceding chapters of Isaiah's book, which accuses the Hebrews of replacing their faith in God with reliance on divination, foreign powers, wealth, military might, and idols (Joseph Jensen, O.S.B., and William H. Irwin, C.S.B., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 1990).

The Hebrews have disappointed God, who had planted them in the Promised Land with the hope that their lives would bear the fruits of piety and justice. Instead, they ignore God, listen to false prophets, and acquire money and might at the expense of the poor.

In the Second Reading, Saint Paul continues delineating the traits of true followers of Christ. Their steady focus on the things of God has giv-



en them a peace unknowable to those who constantly worry about the pursuit of money, power, and other worldly goods.

Just as Isaiah's parable focused on the wickedness of Judah's wealthy and powerful, so does the parable Jesus tells in today's Gospel. This time, instead of being compared to a bitter harvest, they are compared to greedy renters who try to keep a rich harvest to themselves, instead of honoring their commitment to share it with their landlord. Not only that, but they also abuse the ones sent by the landlord to collect what is owed him. They even kill the landlord's son!

The greedy renters are the chief priests of Israel, the landlord is God, the errand-running servants are all the prophets of God, and, finally, the landlord's son is Jesus himself. Besides being a rebuke of those who reject Jesus and his message, this parable also serves as a prophecy of his future passion and death

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

Because two of today's three readings tell parables set in vineyards, it is suggested that you begin the liturgy by showing the children a 3-D model of a typical vineyard of biblical times. In a note on Matthew 20:1, *The Learning Bible* says, "A vineyard was usually located on a stony hillside and was often surrounded by a wall to protect the vines. A watchtower was sometimes built nearby so a worker could watch for robbers and animals." (New York: American Bible Society, 2000)

With just a few simple materials, it is easy to build a model of a vineyard. First, find a board or piece of corrugated cardboard to serve as a base.

Place an empty tin can upside down in the center of the base and anchor it with strips of modeling clay or play dough. Around the can, shape a large sheet of brown paper that you have cut from a paper bag, crumpled up, then unfolded so that its texture resembles craggy, rocky ground.

Keep the top of the hill relatively flat so that you can place there a small watchtower fashioned from clay. (Build it to resemble a stone lighthouse.) Surround the foot of the hill with a stone wall fashioned from clay.

Nearby, use small bits of clay to anchor the lid from a jar. This will serve as the pit where the ripened

grapes are stomped into wine. Then use a cotton ball dipped in green poster paint to dab concentric rings of color around the sides of the hill, from top to bottom, suggesting grapevines planted in orderly terraces.

CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps them learn Jesus' teaching about sharing through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork about the renters and the vineyard owner's son. Ask the children what is happening in the picture.

More About ...

Additional Help for Building Your Model

Search online for "hillside vineyard images" to view photos showing how, still today, this type of vineyard is typically laid out. *The Learning Bible* also has a helpful line drawing on the page where chapter 20 of Matthew begins.

An easy recipe for homemade play dough requires mixing together in a bowl 1 cup of salt, 2 cups of flour, and just a little less than 2 cups of boiling water.

Adding food coloring to the hot water will result in dough of that color. Adding 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil will give the compound a smoother texture; while adding 2 tablespoons of alum will give it the pleasing scent of the commercially made product.

Store the dough in a closed container in the refrigerator until you plan to use it.

God's Gardener



Answers will vary.

Leaflet Activity

Jesus' story about the man who rented out his vineyard inspires a trip to a farmer's market this week for families. The children's activity invites them to show how they can be "God's Gardeners."

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Show the children your model of a biblical vineyard, or let them watch you sketch a diagram of one (or show them a picture). Point out its distinctive features. Tell them that knowing something about vineyards will help them understand today's readings better. The First Reading, which comes from the prophet Isaiah, compares the people of God to grapes growing in a vineyard.

Opening Prayer

LEADER: Please bow your heads for the Opening Prayer. Our response to each short prayer will be, "How great is your love, O Lord." Lord, we are like a vineyard that you have planted in a bountiful land. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: You want us to produce the fruits of love and kindness in our lives. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: Have mercy on us, Lord, and forgive us our sins whenever we disappoint you. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

Invite the children to be seated if they have been standing. Turn the electric lights on again, light the candle in the worship area, and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: In today's First Reading, the prophet Isaiah tells us that God has high hopes for his people—just as a vineyard owner has high hopes for a sweet harvest.

Read Isaiah 5:1–7. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning the psalm, sing or announce the response.

LEADER: The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

CHILDREN: The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

LEADER: Read Psalm 80:8 and 11, 14de–15ab and 19.

Second Reading

LEADER: We know that grapes need sunshine, rain, and good soil to grow. But what does a Christian need? Saint Paul tells us in today's Second Reading. Read Philippians 4:6–9. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a story about some renters who agree to work a rich man's vineyard in exchange for a share in his harvest. What do you suppose would happen to them if they were to go back on their deal and try keeping everything for themselves? Listen and you will find out.

LEADER: The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: Read Matthew 21:33–43. Then say, “The Gospel of the Lord.”

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Begin with these thoughts and questions.

- How many of you have ever asked for a puppy or a kitten? (Take a show of hands.)
- When you asked, you were probably told, “Only if you promise to help take care of it.”
- What are some things, for example, that you need to do when caring for a dog? (Give it water and food, take it on walks, clean up its messes.)
- Whenever God gives us good things, God, too, hopes that we will take care of them—and that, if possible, we will share our blessings with others.
- Can you name some of the blessings you have received from God?

For each blessing the children name, suggest ways they can care for that blessing and/or share it with others. For example, if they say “my parents,” remind them to show care for their parents by loving and obeying them. If they say, “food,” remind them to show respect for this blessing by not wasting food or complaining about it—and that they can share this blessing by donating items to a food pantry or sharing lunch with a classmate who forgot his or hers.

Wrap up the Homily by saying, “Whenever we show care and respect for God’s blessings and share them with others, we are living up to God’s hopes for us. We are like a vineyard that produces beautiful, sweet grapes for its owner.”

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith. Respond to each question with the words, “I do.” Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, who showers you every day with gifts and blessings?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who is God’s greatest gift to the world?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit, who gives you a share in God’s own life?

CHILDREN: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: As people blessed by a loving God, let us pray that our Church and our world will be blessed, too. Our response to each petition will be, “Hear us, O Lord.” Strengthen all bishops, priests, and Church leaders in their work of caring for God’s Church throughout the world, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Strengthen a spirit of caring and sharing in all the families of our parish, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Bless with food, shelter, and clothing all the poor and homeless who live in our area, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Heavenly Father, you planted us in the world to produce the fruits of love and kindness. We grow through the light of your only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the waters of your grace poured out on us through the power of the Holy Spirit. For all good gifts we thank you, O Lord, forever and ever.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven’t already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week’s Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.



Today's Readings

Isaiah 25:6–10a

Psalm 23:1–3a, 4abcd
& 5ac, 6

Phillipians 4:12–14, 19–20

Matthew 22:1–10

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a potted plant or vase of fresh flowers
- ☐ if you wish, a photo from a magazine of an abundant table

Have ready for use during the Gathering activity:

- ☐ a music player
- ☐ a recording of John Burland's "Come, Do This in Memory Me"

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"Come Gather" (Seeds CD-2, Track #2) or "Come, Do This in Memory of Me" (Promise & Good News CD-1, Track #20)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)

Come to the Lord's Banquet

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

You, LORD God, are my protector.
Rescue me and keep me safe from all
who chase me. (PSALM 7:1)

Scripture Background

In today's First Reading, Isaiah speaks to a nation defeated in war and exiled abroad. His audience has come to understand their downfall as just punishment for their sins against God and neighbor.

To a repentant people, Isaiah announces God's promise of something to come that is even greater than a restoration of the people's former glory. The mountain of the Lord—that is, what we know today as Jerusalem's Temple Mount—will become a beacon to all nations. All the world will come to recognize Israel's God and will flock to Jerusalem to worship him.

There, God will prepare a banquet for all who come. (It is easy to see why Christians later interpreted this passage as a prophecy of the messianic banquet to be celebrated forever in the Kingdom of God.)

Nevertheless, until time ends in that eternal banquet, the world's citizens—believers and unbelievers alike—will continue to know periods of suffering and want. Saint Paul refers to this reality in today's Second Reading when he says, "I have lived under all kinds of conditions."

So what immediate advantage does he have, if any, as a follower of Christ in an unpredictable world? He says, "Christ gives me the strength to face anything." He also receives the support of his fellow Christians. To those of Philippi he gratefully notes, "It was good of you to help me when I was having such a hard time."

The parable Jesus tells in today's Gospel is, for the most part, a description of life in God's kingdom. All are invited, but no one is forced,



to enter that kingdom. Being there is a wonderful experience, but all must take care not to get so involved in everyday duties that they neglect the things of God and ignore his call when it comes.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

When the German priest and scholar Romano Guardini wrote his 1918 classic *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, he devoted part of its first chapter to the importance of praying with the heart: "The Church's worship is full of deep feeling, of emotion that is intense, and sometimes even vehement. Take the Psalms, for instance—how deeply moving they often are!"

About liturgical prayer, Guardini added: "It must clearly express the great fundamental feelings, both natural and spiritual, as do the Psalms ... where we find the utterance of adoration, longing for God, gratitude, supplication, awe, remorse, love, readiness for sacrifice, courage in suffering, faith, confidence, and

so on. The emotion must not be too acutely penetrating, too tender, or too delicate, but strong, clear, simple and natural."

By their very nature, children are open to and adept at praying with the heart. It is hoped that today's readings and Homily will help them more clearly perceive and experience the Sunday liturgy as a warm exchange of love between God and them, just as activities like visiting relatives and attending birthday parties strengthen social ties.

CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps them learn Jesus' teaching about listening to God through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork about the parable and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

More About ...

Wedding Banquets in the Time of Jesus

When a wealthy father gave his child a big wedding, he sent servants to let the intended guests know that a wedding was imminent. Then preparations were made that took days to complete. When everything at last was in order, servants were sent around a second time to let the invited know that everything was ready and they should come.

It was this "second call" that was shunned by the intended guests in today's parable—a tale that turns out to be full of unexpected twists and turns. In real life, widespread rejection of a wedding invitation never occurred, the intended guests did not kill the host's messengers, and the host did not retaliate with killing!

The servants in today's parable represent all God's prophets. The recalcitrant guests stand for those who reject the prophets. The guests gathered from the streets are all those who answer the call of the prophets—even well-known sinners.



B	E	U	Q	N	A	B	S	A	T	A	I
A	A	G	D	Y	G	U	E	S	T	S	U
R	E	N	D	W	Z	K	R	J	I	U	O
F	C	A	Q	Y	F	W	V	I	X	L	H
S	E	G	C	U	R	J	A	I	V	E	X
R	W	G	E	D	E	I	N	Q	S	J	B
E	B	M	T	Q	Z	T	T	X	U	E	E
A	J	N	D	J	J	U	S	W	S	S	H
D	R	U	A	W	K	I	N	G	E	U	M
Y	D	K	I	Z	P	Z	R	Y	J	S	Y
D	P	Z	T	E	J	N	C	N	K	H	F
J	W	E	D	D	I	N	G	C	E	E	X

Leaflet Activity

The king gave a party and none of the invited guests came! Hard to imagine, isn't it? Usually people don't want to miss parties. So, families celebrate Family Day this week by having their own celebration. The children's activity is a word search based on today's Gospel.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Demonstrate for the group the dance steps that go with just the first verse of John Burland's "Come, Do This in Memory of Me." (These basic steps will be repeated throughout the whole song.) Then form a conga line of children behind you, with each child placing his or her hands on the waist of the person in front of him or her. Explain that together you are going to dance all around the worship space just as King David once danced around the altar to show his joy at being in God's presence. Then start the recording of the Gathering hymn and wend your way around the room while leading the children in these dance steps:

LYRICS (VERSE 1)

This is my body that's
broken for you

Come do this in memory
of me

This is my blood that's been
given for you

Come do this in memory
of me

STEPS

Right foot forward, left beside
right (4X)

Right foot out, right foot in,
left foot out, left foot in (2X)

Right foot forward, left beside
right (2X)

Right foot out, right foot in,
left foot out, left foot in (2X)

Opening Prayer

LEADER: Please be seated. Bow your heads for the Opening Prayer. Our response to each short prayer will be, "How great is your love, O Lord." You prepare for all people the finest of feasts. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: You serve the bread and wine of everlasting life. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great if your love, O Lord.

LEADER: Forgive us our sins and make us worthy of your feast. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: In today's First Reading, the prophet Isaiah says that God pours out great blessings, joy, and peace on all who come to his table.

Read Isaiah 25:6-10a.

At the end of the reading: Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning the psalm, sing or announce the response.

LEADER: I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

CHILDREN: I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

LEADER: *Read Psalm 23:1-3a, 4abcd and 5ac, 6.*

Second Reading

LEADER: In today's Second Reading, Saint Paul reminds us that even when we have worries and troubles, God is present to give us strength.

Read Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested

Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: Can you imagine getting an invitation to God's table and saying "no" because you think you have better things to do? In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a parable about some people who do that very thing.

LEADER: The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: Read Matthew 22:1-10. Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Begin by discussing with children how they feel/what they think whenever they take part in the following activities:

- A visit to Grandma and Grandpa's house.
- A birthday party for another child.
- Explain that, in a way, going to church every Sunday is a little like participating in these activities.
- Just like a visit to Grandma and Grandpa's, the Sunday Mass brings together in one house the scattered members of God's family.
- Just like a birthday party, the Sunday Mass celebrates the life of a good friend—our Lord Jesus.

Then ask the children if they have ever noticed that receiving one blessing sometimes means giving up another blessing:

- You drop whatever fun you're having at home to go to Grandma and Grandpa's.
- At a birthday party, you give away a gift that maybe you wish you could keep.

Conclude with these observations:

- Think how sad your life would be if you never visited relatives or never went to birthday parties.
- In the same way, your life would be sad without weekly visits to God's house.
- How blessed you are when you say "yes" to God's invitation!

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith. Respond to each question with the words, "I do." Do you believe in God, the Father almighty?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life?

CHILDREN: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: As people who have answered God's invitation to come to this place, let us bring to him in prayer all those we care about. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord." For all priests and bishops who today are leading Eucharistic celebrations throughout the world, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: For all the members of our parish family who are here with us today, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: For all the members of our parish family who cannot be here because they are homebound or ill or hospitalized, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Heavenly Father, you have called us here to celebrate the life, Death, Resurrection, and ascension of your Son Jesus. May this Eucharistic feast strengthen us in living out our faith. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.

Today's Readings

Isaiah 45:1, 4–6

Psalm 96:1 & 3, 4–5,
9–10abef

1 Thessalonians 1:1–5b

Matthew 22:15–21

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a potted plant or vase of fresh flowers

Have ready for use during the Gathering activity:

- ☐ a coin
- ☐ a prop to use as a microphone (can be anything from a big spoon to a flashlight)

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"God Loves Me" (Seeds CD-2, Track #15) or **"God's Love Is ..."** (Seeds CD-2, Track #11)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)



We Are Called to Be Good Citizens

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

Tell everyone of every nation,
"Praise the glorious power of
the LORD." (PSALM 96:7)

Scripture Background

King Cyrus of Persia, whom God addresses in today's reading from Isaiah, is perhaps the greatest non-Jewish hero of the Old Testament. After King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had conquered King Jehoiachin of Judah in 597 B.C., some 70 years of exile followed for the defeated Jews. But God rescued his people through Cyrus, who conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., then allowed Babylon's Jewish exiles to return to their homeland. This part of salvation history serves as a perpetual reminder that God can and does work his will through people who don't even know him.

The Second Reading comes from a letter Saint Paul wrote to the Christians of Thessalonica. In today's reading, Saint Paul tells the people that when they were told the Good News, it was with the assurance that comes from the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, of course, spent most of his life in the Aramaic-speaking, Roman-ruled province of Palestine. Every Jewish leader from Jerusalem's High Priest to the three puppet kings installed by Rome favored cooperation with their foreign occupiers. Various popular factions within Palestine, however, openly opposed Rome, including a group known as the Zealots, who advocated armed insurrection. Today's passage from Matthew is one of several Gospel accounts that indicate Jesus' general preference for peaceful cooperation with Rome. He did anything that was asked of him except deny the truth about himself, his relationship to the Father, and the coming of the Kingdom of God. Recall that Pilate



asked Jesus on Good Friday, "Don't you know that I have the power to let you go free or to nail you to a cross?" Yet Jesus calmly answered, "If God had not given you the power, you couldn't do anything at all to me." (John 19:10-11)

Jesus saw that God would bring ultimate good out of the rule of the Romans just as centuries earlier God had accomplished his purposes through the kings of Babylon and Persia.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

All seven sacraments are social celebrations of God's grace active in individual lives. Were it not so, there would be no point in gathering together for everything from the daily celebration of the Eucharist to the once-in-a-lifetime reception of the sacrament of Holy Orders. That is also why catechists who prepare a group of children for First Communion or Confirmation attempt to build a spirit of community among them. This might begin with planning an ice breaker for the very first class—some sort of get-acquainted activity.

Probably many of the same boys and girls in your parish participate in these children's liturgies Sunday after Sunday. They need to develop the feeling that they are connected to one another. They belong to the wider family of God, not just the Joneses or the Cansecos or the Schmidts. In that spirit, today's gathering activity will focus on helping the children in your group learn one another's names.

The suggested Gathering activity also serves another purpose, that of arousing interest in today's Gospel, which is in part about good citizenship. What is true for adults is true for children, too. A little peek into a story, whether it's on film or in print, can stimulate enough curiosity to make them want to see or hear the whole thing. After participating in today's Gathering activity, the children will want to know more about today's Gospel. They will be wondering, "Exactly how did his enemies try to trick Jesus? And how did Jesus use a coin to outsmart them?"

More About ...

Coinage in the Time of Jesus

Two kinds of money were commonly used in first-century Palestine: the silver denarius of Imperial Rome and the silver shekel issued by Jerusalem's Jewish authorities. Only the shekel could be used for Temple-related transactions, such as paying the annual Temple tax or buying an animal for sacrifice at the altar.

The denarius in use during Jesus' public life featured a profile of the emperor and an inscription offensive to Jewish religious sensibilities: "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, great high priest." Only God was divine, and only one high priest served him — the Jewish High Priest in Jerusalem.

Writing in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Benedict T. Viviano, OP, states that Jesus accepted Roman authority as the lesser of two evils—the greater one being anarchy. While allowing for peaceful resistance to any civil laws or orders that violated God's laws, he did not advocate violence against government authorities.

THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps them learn Jesus' teaching about citizenship through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork about Jesus and ask the children what Jesus is doing in the picture.



G O D C A L L S



M E T O



H O N E S T Y A N D



Leaflet Activity

The activity for this week reinforces the Gospel message through a message the children will decode.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Ask the children to sit in a circle. Say that you are going to play a game that will help everyone learn and remember one another's names. Take the microphone in hand and explain that it will be passed around the circle. Each person who receives it must introduce himself or herself to the group by saying with a loud and clear voice, "My name is ____." Then before passing the mike to the next person, the group must answer two simple questions that you will ask about the child with the microphone. The group will answer by using the child's name each time, as in the following example:

LEADER: [Pointing to child's shirt]
Whose nice blue shirt is this?

GROUP: It's Timmy's.

LEADER: Is it anyone else's?

GROUP: No, it's only Timmy's.

Try to name something different about each child, always keeping an accent on the positive so that the child feels in some way complimented. Whose stylish glasses are these?

Wait until the end of the game to take the mike and introduce yourself. Pull a coin from your pocket and ask the questions, "Whose shiny silver coin is this?" and "Is it anyone else's?" After the children answer in the standard way, say, "Actually, this coin is mine and someone else's. On one side it says, 'United States of America,' which means it also belongs to the government. The government manufactured this coin and set up certain rules for how I may use it. For instance, it would be against the law for me to damage this coin so badly that it couldn't be used anymore."

Then note that today's Gospel is about some enemies of Jesus who try to trick him into telling people they don't have to pay taxes, but Jesus will use a coin to outsmart them.

Opening Prayer

LEADER: Please bow your heads for the Opening Prayer. Our response to each short prayer will be, "How great is your love, O Lord." You have given us a good land to live in. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: You have called us to be good Christians and good citizens. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: Forgive us when we don't live according to your call. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: In today's First Reading, God talks to a king of Persia named Cyrus. He tells how he is going to use Cyrus to free Israel, his Chosen People, from the rulers of Babylon.

Read Isaiah 45:1, 4-6. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning the psalm, sing or announce the response.

LEADER: Give the Lord glory and honor.

CHILDREN: Give the Lord glory and honor.

LEADER: Read Psalm 96:1 and 3, 4-5, 9-10abef.

Second Reading

LEADER: In today's Second Reading, Saint Paul writes to some of God's Chosen People living in the city of Thessalonica. As you listen, remember that you are God's chosen people, too — the ones living in the city of [add your city's name].

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1–5b. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: In today's Gospel, some of Jesus' enemies try to trick him into saying that people don't have to obey the law about paying taxes. Notice how he outsmarts them.

LEADER: The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: *Read Matthew 22:15–21. Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."*

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

In a short talk share these points:

- The emperor deserved respect whether he was good or bad.
- Jesus knew that nobody rules over other people without God's permission.
- So we need to respect and, as a general rule, obey government authorities.
- The only time when we may—and should—disobey them is when they ask us to do something wrong.

Conclude by reminding the group that in today's Gospel, Jesus told people to follow the law and be good citizens.

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith. Respond to each question with the words, "I do." Do you believe in God, the Father almighty?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life?

CHILDREN: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: Today for our prayers of petition, let us simply name people who have authority over us. Our response to each petition will be, "Guide them, O Lord." Guide our Holy Father and all leaders of the Church, we pray:

CHILDREN: Guide them, O Lord.

LEADER: Guide our president and all leaders of our country, we pray:

CHILDREN: Guide them, O Lord.

LEADER: Guide police officers, soldiers, and all others who work to keep our country safe, we pray:

CHILDREN: Guide them, O Lord..

LEADER: *Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:*

Heavenly Father, Jesus taught us through word and example that good Christians are also good citizens. Guided by the Holy Spirit, may we always be respectful of our leaders and thankful for our country. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.

Today's Readings

1 Thessalonians 1:5–8a
Psalm 18:1–2, 46, & 50ce
Matthew 22:34–40

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a potted plant or vase of fresh flowers
- ☐ a picture or statue of the Sacred Heart

Have ready for use during the Gathering activity:

- ☐ a music player
- ☐ a recording of "The Great Commandment" by John Burland and JoAnn Paradise or another song about love that has lyrics using the words of Jesus from the Gospels

Have ready for use during the Homily:

- ☐ a board, sheet of newsprint, or sheet of poster board

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"**LOVE God**" (*Seeds CD-2, Track #21*) or "**The Great Commandment**" (*Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #18*)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"**Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia**" (*Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24*)

Jesus Teaches About Love

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

Your way is perfect, LORD, and your word is correct. You are a shield for those who run to you for help. You alone are God! Only you are a mighty rock.

You give me strength and guide me right. (PSALM 18:30–32)

Scripture Background

In the first century, the power of the Gospel to change people's lives probably surprised no one more than it did Saint Paul. Raymond F. Collins writes, "For Paul the proclamation of the Gospel is as much an expression of God's power as is the working of miracles" (*The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 1990).

The Thessalonians' receptiveness to Christ thoroughly impressed Saint Paul. The proof of their faith in Christ lay in their sincere effort to imitate Paul and the other missionaries who first came to them with the Christian message. In so doing, they were imitating Christ himself.

Today's Gospel features the answer Jesus gave to some Pharisees who asked him to name the greatest commandment. Their interest in the subject was understandable, for they were often absorbed in the study of the hundreds of rules and regulations that fill the five books of the Pentateuch. This sometimes made it hard for them to see the proverbial forest for the trees.

In essence, Jesus' questioners wanted him to simplify Mosaic teaching for them, to sum it all up in one concept. Love is that fundamental concept that Jesus offers—understood not as a feeling but as a dedicated commitment of the will to honor and cherish the one loved.

Love of God and love of neighbor were indeed central to Mosaic teaching, but Jesus added a new dimension to the tradition when he noted



that love of self is important, too. Of course he meant the kind of healthy self-love that, more than a century later, was implied in the words of Saint Irenaeus when he said, "The glory of God is man fully alive, and the life of man is the vision of God." Authentic self-love moves one toward closer union with God, which in turn expresses itself in love of neighbor.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

Today's Gathering activity requires an act of contemplative imagination that children probably will find easy—imagining that Jesus is singing to them as they listen to a song while gazing at an image of the Sacred Heart.

After you play the recording of "The Great Commandment," ask the children for their comments and questions about what Jesus told them in the song. Following are some likely questions, along with ways to answer them.

- What does it mean to "love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind?" Jesus wants us to love God as much as we possibly can. God made us and we should honor and respect him every day!
- What does it mean to "love your neighbor as yourself?" Do you like it when someone is nice to you or shares a toy or snack with you? Jesus wants us to treat each others just as we want others to treat us!
- Why are these two commandments "the greatest of all?" Loving God and loving our neighbors are the most important things we do as Christians. We can love God by attending Sunday Mass with our families and learning about him. We can love our neighbors by sharing and being nice to each other.

THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps them learn Jesus' teaching about love through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork about Jesus and ask the children what Jesus is doing in the picture.

More About ...

Buried Treasures in Ancient Palestine

In a seventeenth-century French convent, Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque saw a vision of the heart of Jesus aflame with love. That image quickly gained popularity in France and eventually among Catholics worldwide. Whether or not one believes the vision was real (the Church does not require faith in private revelations), it does have a firm basis in New Testament teachings about the immensity of God's love.

Honoring images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus "does not suggest that God is indifferent to good and evil," writes Father Pat McCloskey, O.F.M.

Jesus' description of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25:31–46 is one of many New Testament passages attesting to God's justice. Nevertheless, meditating on the Sacred Heart can serve as a healthy balance to overly stern (and theologically incorrect) portrayals of God as seeking to punish us for wrongdoing.

See www.padrepio.org/pray/efficacious-novena/ for more more information about the Sacred Heart devotion, including a novena.





Leaflet Activity

Jesus tells us to love God and love our neighbor. This week's activity highlights that truth. Have the children decipher the message about love.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Turn off the lights. The only light should be a candle placed near the Sacred Heart image. Ask the children to be seated around this image and to look upon it in silence while you play the Gathering hymn. They should imagine Jesus singing the song to them. After the hymn is completed, remain in the dark and ask these questions:

- What did Jesus tell you in this song?
- Do you have any questions about what Jesus said?

Turn on the lights and continue with the liturgy.

Opening Prayer

LEADER: Bow your heads for the Opening Prayer. Our response to each short prayer will be, "How great is your love, O Lord."

LEADER: You want us to love you with all our heart, soul, and mind. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: You want us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: You want us to follow your commandments. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: In today's First Reading, Saint Paul congratulates the people of Thessalonica for setting

an example of faith to the rest of the world.

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:5–8a. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning, sing or announce the response.

LEADER: I love you, Lord, my strength.

CHILDREN: I love you, Lord, my strength.

LEADER: *Read Psalm 18:1–2, 46 and 50ce.*

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Gospel Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: In today's Gospel, people ask Jesus the most important question he was ever asked. Listen carefully to his answer.

LEADER: The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: *Read Matthew 22:34–40. Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."*

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Note that the Gospel is about three kinds of love—love for God, love for others, and love for ourselves.

- All three kinds of love are important.
- In fact, we can say that if any one of these missing, then the other two become weaker. For example, our love for God and others is weaker if we don't also love ourselves.

Draw a picture of the three kinds of love to help the children remember them better. Using a board, sheet of newsprint, or sheet of poster board that is clearly visible to all, follow these steps.

- Draw a big heart, saying, "Jesus taught us that the most important commandment is love."
- Draw a giant equilateral triangle inside the heart, saying, "First, we must love God with all our heart, soul, and mind." This triangle is a symbol for God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit." (Point at each side of the triangle as you name the three.) Add, "I made it large because love for God is the most important of the three kinds of love."



Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith. Respond to each question with the words, "I do."

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in God, the Father almighty and Lord all-loving?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life?

CHILDREN: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: Let us show our love for others by praying for them. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord." For our Holy Father and all bishops and priests around the world, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: For the poor, the needy, and all those most in need of our love, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: For all the people we know, especially those we find hardest to love, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Heavenly Father, you have made us to give and receive love. May we become more and more like your Son, Jesus, who loved you with all his heart and soul and mind and his neighbor as himself. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.



Today's Readings

Malachi 2:8–10

Psalm 25:4–5abc, 6
and 7cd, 8–9

1 Thessalonians 2:7–9, 13

Matthew 23:1–12

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a potted plant or vase of fresh flowers
- ☐ a picture or statue of the Sacred Heart

Have ready for use during the Gathering activity:

- ☐ a music player
- ☐ a small travel bag or suitcase, plus assorted piles of clothing, including items such as:
 - 3 different-sized T-shirts
 - 3 different-sized pairs of shorts or pants
 - 3 different-sized pairs of socks
 - 3 different-sized pairs of flip-flops
 - 3 different-sized warm-weather caps or hats
 - 3 different-sized pairs of sunglasses

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING: "Let's Celebrate Now" (Seeds CD-2, Track #12) or "The Beatitudes" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #17)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: "Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)

God Wants Only the Best for Us

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

I offer you my heart, LORD God, and I trust you. You have always been patient and kind. Show how truly kind you are and remember me. (PSALM 25:1–2, 6, 7)

Scripture Background

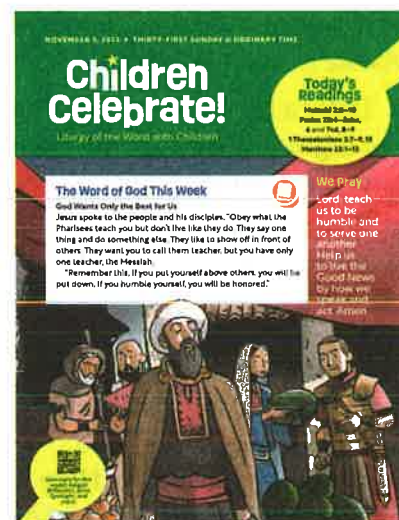
During hard times it is not easy to believe that God wants only the best for his people. Today's First Reading is from the prophet Malachi, who spoke to those Jews who had returned from Babylonian exile and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem. Yet again, their faith in God was slipping away, perhaps because of the difficult circumstances in which they found themselves.

Their Persian overlords were imposing heavy taxes on them. Year after year, their fields were producing poor harvests because of chronic drought and repeated grasshopper infestations. Yet God accepted none of these burdens as an excuse for the increasing sinfulness of the priests in Jerusalem. They were misleading the people, cheating each other, and giving preferential treatment to the wealthy.

Standing in strong contrast to the priests of the First Reading are Saint Paul and his missionary companions in the Second Reading. In his letter to the Thessalonians, Saint Paul reminds them how he, Silvanus, and Saint Timothy tried not to be a financial burden on the community while preaching the Gospel among them.

Instead, the three missionaries worked hard to support themselves and take care of their own expenses during that time. In fact, their love for the Thessalonians grew so strong that they became like mothers to them, willing to sacrifice their very lives for them if necessary.

In today's Gospel, Jesus calls out the Pharisees and the teachers of



the Law. They are failing their people by giving them poor example, even though what they teach about Mosaic law for the most part is correct. They cling too closely to their titles and the accompanying privileges, such as the best seats at banquets. They take too much pride in outward displays of piety while neglecting acts of mercy and compassion for their neighbors.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

Today's Homily builds on the Gathering activity, which ends with the observation that God wants only the best for his people. If we are true children of God, we, too, will want the best for each other.

As Jesus says in the Gospel, we all "are like brothers and sisters" who "have the same Father in heaven" (Matthew 23:8, 9). Just as family unity is destroyed by brothers and sisters who jealously try to outshine one another and refuse to share with one another, so also is Christian unity destroyed by personal sins of pride and selfishness.

Before meeting with the group, reflect on times when you have found children's behavior selfish and annoying, whether in your own home or in public places, and do not hesitate to bring these observations into your Homily. When you ask the group to name times when kids can be boastful or "grabby," using a few lead questions might help them get started. Ask such questions as, "For example, is it nice to brag to a poor student about a good grade you got in school?" and "Is it nice to take the last piece of chicken from the platter before asking if anyone else wants it?" Help them understand why these behaviors are thoughtless.

Here are some other examples of self-centered behavior that possibly may apply to the children in your group:

- Displaying **pride** is bragging about one's skills in art, music, or sports to children who are not as good at these activities.
- **Selfishness** is making others stand when there aren't enough seats for everyone at a gathering.

USING THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps them learn Jesus' teaching about humility through a summary of the Scripture story, prayer, and a creative activity.

Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

More About ...

Don't Call Anyone on Earth Your Father

Sometimes Catholics wonder why we call our ordained priests "Father" when Jesus appears to expressly forbid this in today's Gospel. If Jesus had meant his statement literally, however, it would also be wrong to use titles like "father" or "dad" within Catholic families.

Jesus also tells his followers to avoid the titles "teacher" and "leader." Again, he is not speaking literally. His movement would not have survived his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension if he had not left behind a structure that included authorized teachers and leaders. What Jesus opposed was covetous clinging to such titles and grasping after privileges that supposedly went with them. He opposed using titles to play games of one-upmanship with those whom one is actually called to serve.

"[But as apostles] we could have demanded help from you," Saint Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in today's Second Reading. The fact that he didn't ask for their help shows how well Saint Paul grasped Jesus' message.

Matthew 23:1–12

PCRETIUSR	SCRIPTURE	SMEOS	MOSES
RHPAESIE	PHARISEE	USJES	JESUS
CTHEARE	TEACHER	QUTBANE	BANQUET
AHSMIES	MESSIAH	MUHLBE	HUMBLE
RSNEAVT	SERVANT	DNBRUE	BURDEN

Leaflet Activity

The Pharisees were used by Jesus as an example for obeying what is preached but not following bad examples of the preachers. They were proud men who thought themselves better than others. This week, families recognize the true gifts God has given each member. Children unscramble words from today's Gospel.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Sing along with a recording of the opening hymn while waving your hands in the air and processing to the worship space. Once there, invite the children to be seated. Bring out the suitcase, and say, "Now that summer is long gone and winter is on the way, wouldn't it be nice to vacation at a sunny beach somewhere?"

Then give the suitcase to one of the children and offer to help him or her pack for such a vacation. Going consecutively through the piles of clothing you have gathered, ask which T-shirt, shorts, and other items best suits him or her. As the child picks out the best item in each category, affirm the child's choice by saying, "Yes, that one really is best for you." Let the child put each item in the suitcase however he or she wishes — folded or loose. (Kids who have learned how to fold clothes will enjoy displaying their skill.)

When the suitcase is packed, close it, and place it in the worship space, saying, "Let's put this here as a reminder of something important to know about God. Wherever we go and whatever we do, God always wants what is best for us."

Opening Prayer

LEADER: Bow your heads for the Opening Prayer. Our response to each short prayer will be, "How great is your love, O Lord." You guide us by the light of your truth. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: You show us your paths and teach us to follow you. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: Forgive us when we turn away from you

and walk in the darkness of sin. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: Today's First Reading comes from ancient times, when God and the prophet Malachi had to scold the priests of Jerusalem for misleading and mistreating other people.

Read Malachi 2:8–10.

LEADER: The word of the Lord.

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning, sing or announce the response.

LEADER: Teach me your ways, O Lord.

CHILDREN: Teach me your ways, O Lord.

LEADER: *Read Psalm 25:4–5abc, 6 and 7cd, 8–9.*

Second Reading

LEADER: In today's Second Reading, Saint Paul reminds the people of Thessalonica that during the time he stayed with them, he tried to care for them as a mother cares for her children. He knew that God wants only the best for his people.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7–9, 13.

At the end of the reading:

LEADER: The word of the Lord

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested

Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Gospel Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: In today's Gospel, Jesus warns us not to be the kind of people who care more about themselves than they do about others.

LEADER: The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: Read Matthew 23:1–12. Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Base a Homily on these ideas and questions.

- Although Jesus was talking about some of Palestine's religion teachers in today's Gospel, his words apply to us, too, whenever we act with pride or selfishness.

When are some times when a kid might act like a show-off?

- Here's what Jesus says to show-offs: "Whoever is the greatest should be the servant of the others."
- When are some times when kids grab the best for themselves without worrying about sharing with others?
- Here's what Jesus says to selfish people: "If you put yourself above others, you will be put down."
- We said at the beginning of this liturgy that God wants only the best for his people. Because all of us are brothers and sisters in God's family, that means we should want only the best for each other, too.

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith. Respond to each question with the words, "I do."

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in God, the Father almighty and Lord all-loving?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who taught us how to love one another through word and example?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life, who helps us avoid sins of selfishness and pride?

CHILDREN: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: Knowing that God wants only the best for his people, let us pray for all people in need of our prayers. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord." That our Holy Father and all leaders of the Church will care for God's people as a mother cares for her children, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That those with less than they need to live on will receive help from those who have more, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That everyone in our parish will treat each other like brothers and sisters in the one family of God, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Heavenly Father, you made us brothers and sisters in Christ when you sent your Son into the world to teach us your ways and save us from sin. Help us as we strive this week to live as worthy members of your family, through the same Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. Remind them to take their leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.

Today's Readings

Wisdom 6:12–16

Psalm 63:1, 2–3, 6–7

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

Matthew 25:1–13

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a potted plant or vase of fresh flowers
- ☐ (optional) an oil lamp, kerosene lamp, or similar item

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"God's Love Is ..." (Seeds CD-2, Track #11) or **"Upon This Rock"** (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #21)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)



Jesus Says Be Ready for Him

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

*As long as I live, I will pray to you.
I will sing joyful praises
and be filled with excitement like
a guest at a banquet. (PSALM 63:4–5)*

Scripture Background

Composed around 50 B.C., the Book of Wisdom is one of several works of wisdom literature included in the Old Testament of the Catholic Bible. One aim of this genre is to encourage readers to seek wisdom, an attribute with a distinctive meaning for the Hebrews.

Wisdom referred to a particular type of knowledge that combines keen insight into God's laws with the Jews' faithful daily observance. The Jews believed that the wiser a person was, the more Godlike that person was.

Today's passage from the Book of Wisdom compares wisdom to a resplendent woman always willing and ready to instruct those who approach her. She does not hide from people, but sits every morning at their gates, waiting to be invited into their lives.

In today's passage from 1 Thessalonians, Saint Paul addresses the community's concerns about those among their number who had died before the Second Coming, an event they thought was imminent.

The Thessalonian converts knew they would be given eternal life, but had their beloved dead missed their chance by dying too soon? Saint Paul assured them that Christ would bring eternal life to all the faithful, living and dead, on the day of his return.

Today's Gospel features a parable Jesus told about the Day of the Lord, a future time of fulfillment that many Hebrew prophets had written about. Only after the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ did his disci-



ples fully understand that the Day of the Lord would be the day of the Second Coming. Jesus said it would be like a joyous wedding celebration between God and his people.

Nevertheless, no typical Jewish wedding could happen until the groom arrived to escort his bride to the celebration, which required the bride and her companions to keep their lamps burning all through the night if the groom delayed his arrival. According to Father Benedict T. Viviano, OP, the lamp oil of the parable represents good works. Readiness for the Second Coming will depend on one's steady efforts at doing good.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

The first time Jesus broke through Heaven's gates, as it were, to become part of our material world, he made the greatest difference in the lives of those Jews in tune enough with God to recognize God's Chosen One in their midst. When Jesus comes again, he will gather together the faithful of every race and nation, living and dead, for an eternal reward.

It is important that children understand the primarily joyful nature of the Second Coming. Were it not so, Jesus would not have compared it to a wedding celebration. Being ready, however, will require some preparation on our part.

In Jesus' day, being ready for a wedding required each invited guest to keep a light burning throughout the night (several consecutive nights, if necessary). A little hand-held lamp was required of every person who wished to participate in a nighttime wedding procession.

In a similar way, every human being who wants to be taken into the everlasting Kingdom of God is responsible for maintaining a personal state of readiness for the Second Coming of Christ. Doing daily acts of charity for God and neighbor is how one prepares.

The children need to understand that the Second Coming will be joyous event for everyone who prepares for it. The preparation should be done as carefully as a couple gets ready for a wedding or an athlete trains for a big game, and it consists of doing good deeds for God and neighbor every day of one's life.

More About ...

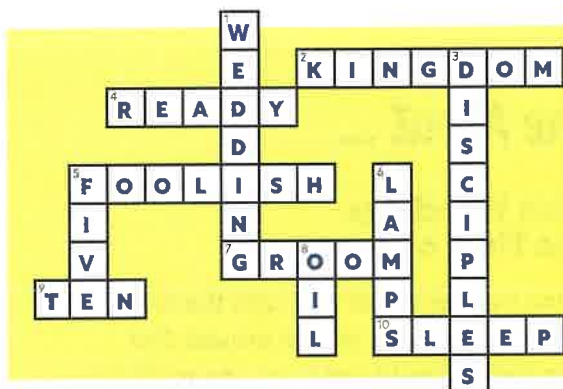
Jewish Weddings in the Time of Jesus

- Young maidens kept vigil with the bride in her home until the groom arrived. The waiting period could last from one to 10 days.
- When the wedding feast was ready, the groom went to the bride's house to escort the bridal party to the wedding.
- If the groom came at night, the women could nap while waiting, but they needed to keep their lamps burning. No individual was permitted on the streets at night without a lit oil lamp.
- Sometimes in the playful hope of catching everyone asleep, the groom deliberately waited until a late hour to arrive.
- After he came, the wedding party wandered all around the village picking up guests for the celebration.
- People danced, sang, and played musical instruments as they proceeded to the wedding. An old Jewish saying states, "Everyone from six to 60 will follow the marriage drum."

THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps them learn Jesus' teaching about him coming again, through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is going on in the picture.



Leaflet Activity

Be prepared! How often we hear that. Today's Gospel shows the consequences of not being prepared. The five foolish girls missed the wedding celebration when they ran out of oil to light their lamps. Families make a special candle to use on their meal table, assuring that Jesus is always present with them. Children solve a crossword puzzle after they've read today's Gospel.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

After leading the children in singing one of the Gathering songs invite them to be seated. Explain that in the time of Jesus, one thing that could make a whole village happy was a wedding celebration. Share the information from this week's "More About ..." and, if possible, show the children how an oil lamp or kerosene lamp works. Tell the children that weddings and oil lamps will be important symbols in today's Gospel.

Opening Prayer

LEADER: Bow your heads for the Opening Prayer. Our response to each short prayer will be, "How great is your love, O Lord." Beautiful and bright are your love and light. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: We, too, become beautiful and bright when we welcome you into our hearts. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: Forgive us our sins and make us worthy to receive you. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: Today's First Reading compares the wisdom of God to a beautiful lady who sits outside your house every morning, waiting for you to notice her and ask her inside.

Read Wisdom 6:12-16. Then say "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning, sing or announce the response.

LEADER: My soul is thirsting for you,
O Lord my God.

CHILDREN: My soul is thirsting for you,
O Lord my God.

LEADER: *Read Psalm 63:1, 2-3, 6-7.*

Second Reading

LEADER: In today's Second Reading, Saint Paul explains why we shouldn't be too sad whenever a fellow Christian dies. We know we will see that person again, alive and risen from the dead just like Jesus.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Then say "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Gospel Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a story to remind us always to keep our love-light shining bright.

LEADER: The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: Read Matthew 25:1–13. Then say, “The Gospel of the Lord.”

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Base a Homily on these ideas and questions.

- What Jesus is really talking about in today’s Gospel is the day when he will come again.
- On that day Jesus will take everyone who has lived a good life, whether living or dead, to his heavenly kingdom.
- How do we live good lives? By doing good deeds as often as we can. For example, here are some good things I have done so far today. (Name them.)
- What are some good things you have done so far today?
- Here are some other good things I plan to do later today. (Name them.)
- What are some good things you plan to do later today?
- Guess what? You and I are keeping our love-lights shining bright! That means Jesus could return to earth today and we’d probably be ready for him.
- Just remember that today’s good deeds are things we need to keep doing every day. Our good deeds are like the oil that keeps an oil lamp burning.

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith. Respond to each question with the words, “I do.”

LEADER: Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, whose wisdom and love are the light of our lives?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who rose from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and one day will come again in glory?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life, who helps us keep our love-lights shining bright?

CHILDREN: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: Now let us show our trust in God and our love for our neighbors by praying for their needs. Our response to each petition will be, “Hear us, O Lord.” That our Holy Father, all bishops and priests, and all sisters and brothers will keep their love-lights shining bright, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That all of us here, along with our family members and friends, will be ready for Christ when he comes again, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That all those who are grieving for loved ones who have died will find comfort in the Good News of the Resurrection, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Loving God, you made us to know and love you on earth and to enjoy your company forever in Heaven. We understand that our faith shows in our love, and that every day we need to keep our love-lights shining bright. Through the goodness of our lives, may all the world come to know and love you, through Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven’t already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week’s Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.

Today's Readings

1 Thessalonians 5:1–6
Psalm 27:1, 13–14
Matthew 25:14–15, 19–21

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a potted plant or vase of fresh flowers
- ☐ For use during the Homily, have ready “Fable” by Ralph Waldo Emerson which can be found at poets.org. Also, if you wish, have a squirrel hand puppet or stuffed animal.

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

“God Gave Me Hands”
(Seeds CD-1, Track #13) or
“CHOICES” (Promise & Good News CD-1, Track #16)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

“Gospel Acclamation;
Alleluia” (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)



God Wants Us to Do Our Best

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

I ask only one thing, LORD: Let me live in your house every day of my life to see how wonderful you are and to pray in your temple. (PSALM 27:4)

Scripture Background

In today's passage from 1 Thessalonians, Saint Paul speaks of the suddenness with which the Second Coming will happen. Those who are not prepared for it—those who have been living in the darkness of sin—will find the event frightening and painful. But those who have been living in the light of Christ will have nothing to fear. They have been carrying on Jesus' work in the world, and seeing him face-to-face will complete their joy.

When Saint Paul wrote of those living in the light versus those living in the dark, he had in mind believers in Christ versus nonbelievers. Over the centuries, however, the Church has grappled with the question of what happens to those who live Christlike lives even if they have never heard of Christ—or have heard of him and rejected him because they were presented with a false image.

It was these virtuous souls that theologian Father Karl Rahner, S.J., had in mind when writing of what he called “the anonymous Christian.” He suggested that they, too, will be among the saved.

The story of the three servants in today's Gospel is complex and can be interpreted in a variety of ways. The interpretation most appropriate for children is that God expects us to use wisely the unique talents he has given each of us.

Exactly what those gifts are and how many of them we have been given does not matter. What does matter is the love and diligence we use



to perfect them. Our talents should not be hidden, buried, or neglected, for when our lives end, we will receive a blessing as great as the effort we have made to develop and expand on them.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

While televisions, computers, smartphones, and tablets are part of almost every child's life, problems arise if these devices take up too much of a child's time. Few are the persons who ever gained a sense of self-respect or learned to give back to society by accumulating hours in front of a TV or a touch screen. Gaining skills in an area in which one is gifted, however, can ensure a lifetime of satisfaction and achievement. It also fulfills the mandate of today's Gospel.

Not long after birth, a child begins to show a predilection for certain objects and experiences. Some infants and toddlers love sounds and rhythms; others love shapes and colors. Some love using their hands with toys like building blocks and hammer-and-peg sets. Others love looking at picture books and listening to stories. All these preferences can be early indicators of talents a child might want to develop later in life.

Parents and teachers help children discover their

gifts when they expose children to a variety of activities and compliment children on their budding talents. A girl might not know she likes helping others until an adult takes her to a soup kitchen to help with serving. A boy might not know he is good at art until an adult tells him what is well-done about a particular picture he has drawn.

These liturgies for children often include suggestions for activities to conduct with children. It may take a little extra work to set up an art project or teach children a liturgical movement, but don't underestimate the value of such experiences for a curious, growing child. To learn more, go to bit.ly/1rg6Wbl where you'll find information from Keep Connected

THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps them learn Jesus' teaching about using our talents, through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is going on in the picture.

More About ...

Alternate Gathering Activity

Assemble these items:

- ☐ Crayons
- ☐ Drawing
- ☐ a sample picture that shows you doing something you are good at doing

Gather the children around a table or on a section of hard floor where they can work. Ask if they ever draw a picture just as a little gift for their parents. (Rare is the child who has not done this.) Then tell them that today's liturgy will begin with drawing a picture just for God.

In their pictures they will show themselves doing something they are good at doing. It will be a way of saying, "Thank you, God, for giving me this talent."

Then show the sample picture you have drawn and explain your talent. Finally, ask each child, one by one, to name something he or she is good at. That is what the child might wish to draw. (Some children may need help thinking of their talents.)



LBEXTOAPLALCTENZAQTSI

L E T A L L T H A T I

STAFYBAZNXDODWOMGPINVR

S A Y A N D D O G I V E

BMRNAOTQSZEBTCODYXOWU

P R A I S E T O Y O U

LEOTRQDOJAENSEUFS

L O R D J E S U S .



Leaflet Activity

Paying attention to the moment is often hard for us. This week, families are given a fun way to do this while preparing for the Thanksgiving holiday. The children's activity involves finding a seasonal message.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Tell the children that today's liturgy invites us to think about how special each one of us is. For this reason, each child will be invited to dance his own way—to make up his own freestyle dance—as you play one of the Gathering songs. When the dancing is done, invite the children to be seated in the worship space.

Opening Prayer

LEADER: Bow your heads for the Opening Prayer. Our response to each short prayer will be, "How great is your love, O Lord." Because all our gifts and talents come from you, you know what each of us can do. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: You give each of us something special to do in life. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

LEADER: When we use our talents for the good of your kingdom, you give us a share in your own happiness. How great is your love, O Lord.

CHILDREN: How great is your love, O Lord.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: In today's First Reading, Saint Paul says that the Second Coming of Christ will be scary for people who live in the darkness of sin, but it will be

happy for people who live in the light of God's love and truth.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1–6. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning, sing or announce the response.

LEADER: The Lord is my light and my salvation.

CHILDREN: The Lord is my light and my salvation.

LEADER: *Read Psalm 27:1, 13–14.*

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Gospel Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a story to explain what will happen to his faithful friends and servants at the end of their lives.

LEADER: The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: *Read Matthew 25:14–15, 19–21. Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."*

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Read aloud Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem called "Fable." Feel free to modernize some of the words if you like. You might also wish to use a hand puppet or stuffed animal when speaking the squirrel's lines, as well as raise your voice to a higher cartoon-like pitch.

After the reading, conduct a short discussion about the poem by using these questions and ideas:

- A mountain is big and mighty, but what is something a little ol' squirrel can do that a mountain can't? (Crack a nut.)
- What is something a mountain can do that a squirrel can't? (Carry a whole forest on its back.)
- What this fable shows is that everybody, whether great or small, has talent.
- Talent is like the money the man gave his three servants before leaving town in today's Gospel story. Did you notice the differing amounts he gave to each servant (five coins to the first, two to the second, and one to the third)?
- What question did the man ask his servants when he returned home? (What have you done with my money?)
- What did the man say when he learned that the first servant had earned 5,000 more coins? ("Wonderful! You are a good and faithful servant. ... Come and share in my happiness.")
- God is like that rich man. God gives us gifts that he wants us to use wisely. We should not ignore them or hide them away.
- If we do use them well, at the end of our lives God will say to us, too, "Come and share in my happiness."

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith. Respond to each question with the words, "I do." Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, giver of all good gifts?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who taught us to use our gifts wisely?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life, who uses our gifts to build up the Church on earth?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe in the holy Catholic Church, which needs the special gifts of each person in it?

CHILDREN: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: As children of light and members of God's holy family, the Church, let us pray for the good of each and every person in our Church and world. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord." That our Holy Father, all bishops and priests, and all sisters and brothers will use their gifts for the good of the entire Church, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That the leaders of every country on earth will use their gifts to achieve justice for the poor and peace for everyone, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That each of us here will use our gifts to add love to the lives of everyone we know, we pray:

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: *Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:*

Loving God, thank you for the many gifts you have given your children. May we learn to use our own gifts wisely and learn to appreciate the gifts of others, through Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.

Music

For planning music, it is best to ask the advice of the parish music minister. If the selections planned for the main assembly for any given weekend are also appropriate for children, use the same music. Because that may not always be possible, *Children Celebrate!* gives suggestions for each Sunday.

Most of the music is available from Pflaum Publishing Group on two sets of CDs. The CD sets are part of the new *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies* music collection correlated to the seasons of the Liturgical Year, featuring songs by well-known Catholic composer John Burland and others.

To view or print the lyrics to the songs, visit gospelweeklies.com/lyrics. For your convenience here, the song titles are color coded to the names of the two CD sets used in *Children Celebrate!*—**purple** for Seeds and **red** for Promise.

TITLE/COMPOSER

CHOICES

(BURLAND)

Come and Follow Me

(BURLAND/PARADISE)

Come, Do This in Memory of Me

(BURLAND)

Come Gather

(BURLAND)

Gather Together

(BURLAND)

LOVE God

(BURLAND/PARADISE)

God Gave Me Hands

(VAGLE)

God's Love Is...

(BURLAND)

God Loves Me

(BURLAND)

Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia

(BURLAND)

I Am the Way

(BURLAND/PARADISE)

Let's Celebrate Now

(BURLAND)

Saints

(BURLAND)

The Beatitudes

(BURLAND/PARADISE)

The Great Commandment

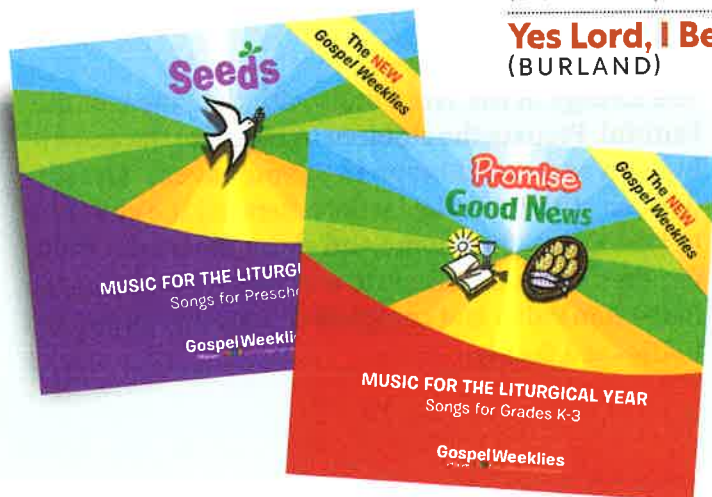
(BURLAND/PARADISE)

Upon This Rock

(BURLAND/PARADISE)

Yes Lord, I Believe

(BURLAND)



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Promise/Good News

2-CD Set PGW-5202

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To purchase MP3s, visit www.giamusic.com/store/pflaum-gospel-weeklies

Leader's Checklist

AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
M T W T F S S	M T W T F S S	M T W T F S S	M T W T F S S
1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3	1	1 2 3 4 5
7 8 9 10 11 12 13	4 5 6 7 8 9 10	2 3 4 5 6 7 8	6 7 8 9 10 11 12
14 15 16 17 18 19 20	11 12 13 14 15 16 17	9 10 11 12 13 14 15	13 14 15 16 17 18 19
21 22 23 24 25 26 27	18 19 20 21 22 23 24	16 17 18 19 20 21 22	20 21 22 23 24 25 26
28 29 30 31	25 26 27 28 29 30	23 24 25 26 27 28 29	27 28 29 30
		30 31	

SUNDAY	PREPARATIONS /PROPS	MUSIC	LECTOR	SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND	HOMILY PREP	CHILDREN'S LEAFLETS	OTHER
8/27/23 21st OT							
9/3/23 22nd OT							
9/10/23 23rd OT							
9/17/23 24th OT							
9/24/23 25th OT							
10/1/23 26th OT							
10/8/23 27th OT							
10/15/23 28th OT							
10/22/23 29th OT							
10/29/23 30th OT							
11/5/23 31st OT							
11/12/23 32nd OT							
11/19/23 33rd OT							

Notes

What worked well in these sessions?

What types of activities best engage the children?

What are some areas for improvement?

Ideas for upcoming sessions:
