Living the Liturgy at Home

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Scripture Readings

Sirach 27:36—28:7

Psalm 103:1–2, 3–4, 9–10, 11–12

Romans 14:7–9

Matthew 18:21–35

Prayer

Lord our God,
just as the rain comes down
to water the earth
and make it fruitful,
so you send forth your word
to do your will in the world.
May this wisdom from heaven
take root in our hearts
and bear fruit in holy words
and loving deeds.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Did You Know?

. . . that the Rite of Penance actually has three different forms available? They are the Rite of Reconciliation of Individual Penitents, the Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution, and the Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with General Confession and Absolution (which is used only in extreme cases). In all these forms, the penitent comes before God in hope, examines his or her conscience, asks to be welcomed back into the "fold," and prays in sorrow for the Holy Spirit's guidance and for God's compassion and mercy.

Conversation Questions

- Why is it so hard to forgive sometimes?
- Are there any grudges between members of our family? What must we do to let go of them?

Faith in Action

This week, as a family, say a prayer together each day for those who have hurt any of you and for those whom you may have hurt. Together, talk about ways that you can bring peace to those situations. If there are people in your lives who you have a hard time treating with kindness, you might resolve to say one nice thing to them every day. Little things, such as saying "Good morning" instead of ignoring someone can help change our attitude and theirs. With God's help through prayer, we can work on forgiving other people, just as God always forgives us.

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

God's Ways Are beyond Our Understanding

Focus: To make God's perspective our own.

Catechist's Context

It is important to remember that it is God who reaches out to each of us, God who calls us all. We may not be asked to do the same things, but we must always respond to the call. God's love is boundless and not subject to our ideas of equity. Rather, we should be focused on the abundance of resources and opportunities and not on the "prize" at the end.

Focus on Church Teaching

Christians must continually learn to think as God does. This is not something that happens automatically by virtue of Baptism. We must be catechized throughout our lives to continue to understand how to embrace Christ (EIA, 69). As we grow into living with the mind of Christ, we help bring about the Kingdom while living in righteousness (CCC, 2046), including seeking economic justice, which honors the basic human and civil rights of all (JM, 9).

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Help the children find today's date on the liturgical calendar. Point out what feast days are coming up this week. As a group, choose one saint to read more about (see pages vi–viii for more information about the saints). How did this saint treat other people? Did he or she treat poor people with kindness? In today's reading, Jesus tells us that God loves everyone the same. How does this make you feel?

Sign of the Cross

All stand and make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gospel Acclamation

See Acts 16:14b

Alleluia, alleluia.
Open our hearts, O Lord,
to listen to the words of your Son.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 20:1–16a

Refer to page xii for citations to the standard Lectionary.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

As Jesus was telling what the kingdom of heaven would be like, he said:

"Early one morning a man went out to hire some workers for his vineyard. After he had agreed to pay them the usual amount for a day's work, he sent them off to his vineyard.

"About nine that morning, the man saw some other people standing in the market with nothing to do. He said he would pay them what was fair, if they would work in his vineyard. So they went.

"At noon and again about three in the afternoon he returned to the market. And each time he made the same agreement with others who were loafing around with nothing to do.

"Finally, about five in the afternoon the man went back and found some others standing there. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?'

"'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. Then he told them to go work in his vineyard.

"That evening the owner of the vineyard told the man in charge of the workers to call them in and give them their money. He also told the man to begin with the ones who were hired last. When the workers arrived, the ones who had been hired at five in the afternoon were given a full day's pay.

"The workers who had been hired first thought they would be given more than the others. But when they were given the same, they began complaining to the owner of the vineyard. They said, 'The ones who were hired last worked for only one hour. But you paid them the same that you did us. And we worked in the hot sun all day long!'

"The owner answered one of them, 'Friend, I didn't cheat you. I paid you exactly what we agreed on. Take your money now and go! What business is it of yours if I want to pay them the same that I paid you? Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Why should you be jealous, if I want to be generous?'"

Jesus then said, "So it is! Everyone who is now first will be last."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reflection

Everyone Is Equal before God

Did you ever wonder who will get to heaven?

What do you think you might have to do to get into heaven and be with God forever? Do you have to be a certain age? Do you have to do a certain kind of work? Do you have to be rich or poor?

Jesus answers some of these questions today by telling us a very good story. When Jesus tells a story, we might think it will end in a certain way. But Jesus has his own way of looking at things. It's not always what we think it will be. That's because Jesus looks at things the way God does. We don't always do that.

Today's story is about a man who owned a vineyard. A vineyard is a place where grapes grow. The vineyard owner needed people to work in it so he went out to hire some. Some of the people he hired worked all day, some worked for a half day, and some worked for only one hour. So who do you think should get the most pay? Probably the ones who worked all day. But in Jesus' story, all the workers got the same pay! The workers who were there all day thought the owner cheated them. But the owner said he would give them what he promised them. After all, it was his money and he can do whatever he wants with it. The workers got what they were promised, and they were not given less.

So what was the problem? How do you think the workers who complained felt?

The workers felt jealous of the pay the others got when they worked only a short time. Jesus teaches us that is how God acts when he invites us to be part of his Kingdom. It doesn't matter if you've been working for God's Kingdom your whole life or if you have been doing so only a short time.

Let's think about it this way: your mom lets you invite three friends for a play date. You spend all afternoon playing in your room and it gets quite messy. Your mom comes in and says to all four of you, "It's time to clean up. I'll be back to check in a few minutes." Everyone starts to clean. You work very hard to clean up. Two of your friends help a little bit. One just puts a few things away and even sits down for a while. When your mom returns she thanks everyone equally and invites all of you to have some cookies and milk. You worked the hardest—how would you feel? You might feel angry or jealous but your mom was generous. She saw that everyone did something to help clean the room. Your friends might think twice next time and be encouraged to do more seeing how equally kind your mom was.

So we learn from today's Gospel that God will be generous with all of us. We should not feel jealous but be happy that God loves us all the same and wants us all to be a part of his Kingdom. God doesn't always have the same idea about equality that we do, so we should also try to think about things from a higher point of view. Just think: God sent his Son to save all of us, not just some of us. Jesus taught and healed many people, and it didn't matter that they were considered outsiders or not Jewish, or children, or were rich or poor. In God's eyes, we are all equal!

Circle of Blessings

Have the children sit in a circle on the floor. Remind them that all we have comes from God, who is equally generous and loves us all the same. Invite each child to name a blessing for which he or she is thankful (for example, "Thank you, God, for blessing me with my family"), and go around the circle until each child has had a chance to name a blessing. End the activity by saying together: "Thank you, God, for all your blessings!"

How Can I Help Build God's Kingdom?

You will need images of the following to lead this activity: a book, crayons or paints, a sports ball, musical notes, a house. Add other images if you prefer.

The owner of the vineyard was looking for people to help him work in his vineyard. God is also looking for people to help build the Kingdom on earth. What kind of work can your young children do to help build God's Kingdom? Invite them to look at the pictures and point out the things they can use to do good works and help others. Discuss why they chose each item and ask them to give an example of how they would use it. God's Kingdom is not always built with great works. Sometimes doing simple everyday things well is the most important. Remember, even the workers who labored for only an hour were rewarded the same as the others.

Workers in the Vineyard

You will need a simple outlined picture of a bunch of grapes for each child and purple, green, and brown crayons to lead this activity.

Sharing is an important habit for young children to develop. It helps them to begin to understand fairness and generosity, two things we hear about in today's Gospel. For this activity, give each child a coloring sheet and tell them to color the grapes purple, the stem green, and the background brown. Then, give each child only one crayon. Tell the children that to finish their pictures they must work together by sharing their crayons. Monitor the activity and help problem solve if issues arise. At the end of the activity, encourage the children to continue sharing in their daily activities because it helps us be generous like God.

Living the Liturgy at Home

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Scripture Readings
Isaiah 55:6–9
Psalm 145:2–3, 8–9, 17–18
Philippians 1:20c–24, 27a
Matthew 20:1–16a

Prayer

Lord our God,
you sent your Son into the world
to live with us as one of us,
to heal, to teach, to sanctify,
and to proclaim the Good News
of the coming of the Kingdom.
Help us to live our Baptism to the full
and to find ways to do what Jesus did:
to bring joy and life wherever we go,
to lift up the suffering,
and to tell other people
about the new life Jesus has
brought us.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Did You Know?

. . . that the US bishops' document *Economic Justice for All* states that the economy is one of the primary places we live out our faith? Deciding where to work, how to spend our money, which products to buy, and what charities and causes we support shows our commitment to loving our neighbor and building local and global communities guided by justice and peace.

Conversation Questions

Recall a time when you encountered a situation that wasn't fair. Were there feelings of jealousy? How would God view that situation?

How can we make our actions more generous like God's?

Faith in Action

Do you use a chore chart at home? If not, create one this week. Distribute the jobs randomly, knowing that some will be harder and take more time than others. Tell everyone that at the end of the week they will receive a payment for their work and then give everyone the same payment. (The payment does not have to monetary. It could be in stickers, treats, etc. Whatever it is, ensure that it is the same for everyone.) Then discuss how everyone feels with the payment they received for the work they did. Read today's Gospel passage (Matthew 20:1–16a) and talk about God's generosity.

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Strive Humbly to Do God's Will

Focus: To learn how to walk God's path.

Catechist's Context

We all know the adage, "Actions speak louder than words." Jesus reminds us that what we do matters. Prayer and good intentions are meaningless unless they are complemented by good actions. Jesus told us that he is "the Way." Let us walk securely on that path that leads to God.

Focus on Church Teaching

We are called to humble ourselves, as Jesus did, that we may cooperate with God's grace and glorify God. The Holy Spirit calls us to conversion, to repent and accept forgiveness, that we might be sanctified and experience a renewal of heart. We are justified though faith in Jesus Christ, through whom we are granted the grace of obedience to the will of the Father (CCC, 1989–91). Like Jesus, we are to obey the will of God in all things; through obedience, with great humility, Jesus redeemed us.

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Help the children find today's date on the liturgical calendar. Point out what feast days are coming up this week. As a group, choose one saint to read more about (see pages vi–viii for more information about the saints). Saints act as prophets in their own time and in ours. Through their actions, they call us to act as Christ to others. How might we imitate the ways that this saint answered God's call to do his will?

Sign of the Cross

All stand and make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gospel Acclamation

John 10:27

Alleluia, alleluia.
My sheep listen to my voice, says the Lord;
I know them, and they follow me.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 21:28–32

Refer to page xii for citations to the standard Lectionary.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus said: "I will tell you a story about a man who had two sons. Then you can tell me what you think.

"The father went to the older son and said, 'Go work in the vineyard today!' His son told him that would not do it, but later he changed his mind and went. The man then told his younger son to go work in the vineyard. The boy said he would, but he didn't go. Which one of the sons obeyed his father?"

"The older one!" the chief priests and leaders answered.

Then Jesus told them: "You can be sure that tax collectors and bad women will get into the kingdom of God before you ever will! When John the Baptist showed you how to do right, you would not believe him. But these evil people did believe. And even when you saw what they did, you still would not change your minds and believe."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reflection

Say What You Do and Do What You Say

Doesn't this story sound like something that might happen in your own family? Even if you don't have any brothers or sisters you probably can think of a time when your mom or dad asked you to do something and you said you would do it. But then, when it came time to do it you forgot or you decided you didn't want to do what they asked. Then, you might also remember a time when your parents or teachers asked you to do something and you said, "No, I don't want to do that." Later, you thought about it more and you decided it was something you should do and you went ahead and did it.

Have you ever heard the phrase, "Actions speak louder than words"? What do you think it means?

Sometimes our words are empty. Our actions show others the kind of person we can be. When we share, we show them we are kind. When we forgive, we show them we love others. When we do our work as best we can, we show them we are hardworking. When we do what we say, we show them we are trustworthy.

What can we do to show that we are followers of Jesus? [share, say kind words, ask others to play with us at recess, go to church, pray, listen to our parents, etc.]

In today's Gospel passage, Jesus reminds us to do what we say we will do always. He also tells us we should look at the actions of others and learn from them. If you have a friend who says you should share but never shares, you can see that he doesn't do what he says. When you see a friend inviting someone who doesn't have anyone to play with in a game on a playground, you can see that she is kind and welcoming, and those are actions you can follow yourself.

It is important to say things that are good and right. But, it is just as important to do things that are good and right. Think about some of the things Jesus has said: Love one another. Forgive one another. Trust in God. Pray always. Not only did Jesus say these things, but he also did them. You can see his example in all the Gospel stories. Say what you do and do what you say.

Turning to God

Have the children sit in a circle on the floor. Teach them the phrase, "Jesus, help us follow you!" Instruct them to shout this phrase after each of the following prompts (amend them as necessary):

When we would rather play a video game or watch TV instead of helping our parents with our chores, we say . . .

When we want to sleep some more instead of getting ready for Mass, we say . . .

When we don't feel like sharing our toys with friends, we say . . .

When we throw a tantrum in front of our parents, we say . . .

Conclude this activity by praying, "Dear Jesus, we know how much you love us and want us to be like you. Help us turn to you when we feel tempted to make the wrong choice instead of following you. Amen."

Will You Do This For Me?

Seeing the lesson represented in different and realistic ways might help drive home the message. Invite the children to think of contemporary requests they might receive. For example, clean up toys, feed the pet, set the table, etc. The character of the father might be a teacher, a coach, an older sibling. The children may offer up as many scenarios as time permits.

"Do for You" Coupons

You will need paper and coloring materials to lead this activity.

Distribute paper and coloring materials, and invite the children to make coupons for their parents. On their coupons, they should draw pictures of things they're willing to do to be helpful, such as sweep the kitchen, set the table, or other household tasks. Be sure to tell them that they can't say they'll do something unless they're willing to do it. Before they go home, remind the children to give the coupons to their parents and be sure to do what they promised to do.

Living the Liturgy at Home

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Scripture Readings
Ezekiel 18:25–28
Psalm 25:4–5, 6–7, 8–9
Philippians 2:1–11 or 2:1–5
Matthew 21:28–32

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
you said to the Apostles,
"Come, follow me."
You say the same words to us,
today and every day.
Help us to follow you faithfully:
to walk in the way of your
commandments,
to help those who are struggling,
and to love all people
as you love them.
May we rejoice in your presence
with us
as we work to build up
the Kingdom of God,
where you live and reign
with the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Did You Know?

. . . that the US bishops' document on laypeople working in the Church is called *Coworkers in the Vineyard of the Lord*? The document discusses how, like the father in this Sunday's Gospel, God calls us all to come work in his vineyard, and we are all challenged to find ways to bring our particular talents and expertise to bear.

Conversation Questions

Today's Gospel is a good family story, one that everyone can relate to! Talk about a time when you were asked to do something, promised to do it, and then didn't. Why didn't you do what you were asked?

Talk about a time when you were asked to do something, said no or complained, but then did it. What made you change your mind?

Faith in Action

In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus reminds us that our words of love and obedience toward God must be followed by action. Is there some service for another that you've thought about or talked about but never got around to doing? If you need ideas, look through your parish's bulletin for community needs. Discuss as a family what you can do for someone else, plan the activity, and do it together for the glory of God. Reflect together on how it feels to have actually followed through on your plan.

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Tending to the Vineyard of the Lord

Focus: To produce the fruits of justice.

Catechist's Context

Today's Gospel is a frightening one for young children. Yet, at its core, it is about opening our eyes and ears to people who show us the way to God. How do we recognize people as agents of God's love and mercy? Are we doing our part to build the Kingdom of God?

Focus on Church Teaching

The Kingdom of God is like a vineyard, entrusted to those who tend it in accordance with the will of God. All baptized members of the Church, laity and clergy, are branches of Christ, the true vine, grafted onto him. From him they have life and bear fruit (CL, 9). Those who have specific ministries within the Church tend the vine, feeding it on the Word of God, the teachings, and the sacraments, that the vine may produce the good fruit of justice in the world and service to the poor and the suffering (CL, 16).

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Help the children find today's date on the liturgical calendar. Point out what feast days are coming up this week. As a group, choose one saint to read more about (see pages vi–viii for more information about the saints). Did this saint treat other people the way Jesus told us to treat one another? How is he or she an example of how we should treat other people?

Sign of the Cross

All stand and make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gospel Acclamation

See John 15:16

Alleluia, alleluia.

I have chosen you from the world, says the Lord, to go and bear fruit that will last.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 21:33–43

Refer to page xii for citations to the standard Lectionary.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus told the chief priests and leaders to listen to this story:

"A land owner once planted a vineyard. He built a wall around it and dug a pit to crush the grapes in. He also built a lookout tower.

"Then he rented out his vineyard and left the country.

"When it was harvest time, the owner sent some servants to get his share of the grapes. But the renters grabbed those servants. They beat up one, killed one, and stoned one of them to death. He then sent more servants than he did the first time. But the renters treated them in the same way.

"Finally, the owner sent his own son to the renters, because he thought they would respect him. But when they saw the man's son, they said, 'Someday he will own the vineyard. Let's kill him! Then we can have it all for ourselves.' So they grabbed him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him."

Jesus asked, "When the owner of that vineyard comes, what do you suppose he will do to those renters?"

The chief priests and leaders answered, "He will kill them in some horrible way. Then he will rent out his vineyard to people who will give him his share of grapes at harvest time."

Jesus replied, "Surely you know that the Scriptures say,

'The stone that the builders tossed aside is now the most important stone of all. This is something the Lord has done, and it is amazing to us.'

"I tell you that God's kingdom will be taken from you and given to people who will do what he demands."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reflection

Lord, Help Us to Be Good Workers in Your Vineyard

Let's think about the time before Jesus was born, many, many long years ago. Before his birth in Bethlehem, people were waiting for many years for a Messiah to save them.

Think of something you want very much, and you don't know when you will get it. Is it easy or hard to wait?

If you have to wait too long, do you feel like giving up?

That's how the people felt. They thought their savior would never come. So God kept sending special people to remind them to be patient. These people were called prophets. They spoke God's words to the people and told them never to give up because if God promised to do something God always did it. Some of the people listened, but others gave up. No matter how many times the prophets told them they didn't listen. Some people didn't even listen to Jesus when he finally came. They didn't want to hear what he said about God. They knew that if they listened to Jesus they would have to change the way they were living. They thought it would be easier to do what they wanted to do.

What are some of the things Jesus wants you to do? [be helpful, share, be respectful to adults, etc.]

Are these things easy? Do you sometimes wish you didn't have to do them?

We all feel like that sometimes. But, when you do, remember what Jesus has done for you. Think of all the good things Jesus did to help the people who needed his help. Think of all the times Jesus had to do things that were hard, and he never gave up. Jesus doesn't ask us to do anything that he has not already done himself. He is our example. He is also our helper. When you have to do something hard and want to quit, remember to pray and ask Jesus to be with you.

The people in today's Gospel didn't understand that the work they were asked to do should have helped others and at the same time made them happy. Jesus shares this story with us so we don't make the same mistakes they did. Try to listen to what Jesus teaches us. A good way to do this is to follow the actions of good role models in the faith, like your parents, or your religion teachers, or our parish priests and deacons. They are good examples of how you yourself can follow in the steps of Jesus and grow in God's Kingdom.

Walking in Jesus' Footsteps

You will need large sheets of drawing paper and coloring materials to lead this activity.

Who are the people who teach us about God? Parents and teachers and other faith-filled adults tell us what Jesus asks us to do, and they try to be good models for us. Sometimes we might ignore them and do what we want instead. But we should listen to them and try to walk in Jesus' footsteps.

Help the children trace the outline of their shoes on large sheets of drawing paper. Instruct the children to draw or write something on their footprints that remind them of the kinds of actions Jesus asks them to do.

Alms Box or Bag

To lead this activity, you will need a small box or paper bag for each child, coloring materials, and stickers.Prepare a list for parents of suggested local groups that will accept contributions.

Give each child a small box or bag, coloring materials, and stickers. Explain that God made everything and trusts us to make sure that everyone gets what he or she needs. Sometimes some people get more than they need, and they have to share so that no one goes without. Invite the children to decorate their containers. At home, they will save their pennies or small coins. This will be given to people who need them more than they do. Suggest that they ask their parents to help them decide who will benefit most from their sharing of God's blessings.

Stewardship Project

To lead this activity, you will need a plant or an easily cared for pet (like a goldfish).

Explain to the children that in today's Gospel, the owner of a vineyard (a place where they grow grapes to make wine) hired people to take care of the plants for him. When the time came to pick the grapes, those people did not do as the owner requested. Jesus told this story to remind us to do the work that God requests—living as Jesus did, being kind to others in our words and actions, and taking care of creation.

Bring a small plant or a goldfish for the group to tend. Teach the children what needs to be done to care for this living thing and that they are responsible for its well-being. Tell them that God entrusts us with the great responsibility of caring for all God's creatures. You might keep a log of how the children are caring for the plant until the end of the school year.

Living the Liturgy at Home

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 5:1–7

Psalm 80:9, 12, 13–14, 15–16, 19–20

Philippians 4:6–9

Matthew 21:33–43

Prayer

Lord our God,
just as the rain comes down
to water the earth
and make it fruitful,
so you send forth your word
to do your will in the world.
May this wisdom from heaven
take root in our hearts
and bear fruit in holy words
and loving deeds.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Did You Know?

. . . that in this Sunday's Gospel Jesus refers to the stone that the builders rejected that becomes the cornerstone? This image is taken from Psalm 118. The psalms are central to Jewish worship. In this psalm, which thanks God for his mighty deeds, the verse Jesus quotes is intended to show that God takes what may seem insignificant to humans and uses it for great purpose.

Conversation Questions

As we hear in the Gospel, God sends people into our lives to help us live as Jesus taught us. We don't always recognize them, but we should try to look for them. Who has helped you learn about God?

How might we take better care of the creation entrusted to our care?

Faith in Action

Do some research on the vineyards referenced in Jesus' parable. A grape vineyard could produce vines that can reach over fifty feet and require regular pruning. Vineyard workers must trim the plant and cut the most unfruitful branches. In Jesus' time, the plants were cultivated by Egyptians and Babylonians. In Israel, they had to be protected by armed guards from watchtowers. A thorn hedge prevented outsiders from stealing the grapes at harvest time. To make wine, the grapes were crushed by feet in pits dug in the ground.

Visit a vineyard with your family, if possible. If not, find some videos online to give everyone some context to the setting of today's parable.

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Come to the Banquet

Focus: To respond to God's generous call.

Catechist's Context

Who would not want to be invited to celebrate at a banquet? But, like the guests in today's Gospel, we often let other, less important things get in the way and distract us from God's Kingdom. Let us work to recognize God's call, plan for it, and joyously respond to it.

Focus on Church Teaching

As we approach the end of the liturgical year, we focus on the end of time, when Christ will come in glory and gather his faithful into the fullness of his Kingdom. The ultimate goal of history is the salvation of all people—that was the purpose Jesus' becoming human (GS, 45). Jesus told parables to invite people into God's Kingdom and to teach what is necessary to attain it (CCC, 546). Every celebration of the Eucharist is a foretaste of the joy that the fullness of the Kingdom will bring (EE, 18).

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Help the children find today's date on the liturgical calendar. Point out what feast days are coming up this week. As a group, choose one saint to read more about (see pages vi–viii for more information about the saints). Did this saint say yes to what God was asking him or her to do? Do you think he or she was happy to respond to God's invitation? How do you respond when God asks you to follow his commandments?

Sign of the Cross

All stand and make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gospel Acclamation

See Ephesians 1:17–18

Alleluia, alleluia.
May the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ
enlighten the eyes of our heart,
that we might see how great is the hope
to which we are called.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 22:1–10

Refer to page xii for citations to the standard Lectionary.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus used this story to teach the people:

"The kingdom of heaven is like what happened when a king gave a wedding banquet for his son. The king sent some servants to tell the invited guests to come to the banquet, but the guests refused. He sent other servants to say to the guests, 'The banquet is ready! My cattle and prize calves have all been prepared. Everything is ready. Come to the banquet!'

"But the guests did not pay any attention. Some of them left for their farms, and some went to their places of business. Others grabbed the servants, beat them up, and killed them.

This made the king so furious that he sent an army to kill those murderers and burn down their city. Then he said to the servants, 'It is time for the wedding banquet, and the invited guests don't deserve to come. Go out to the street corners and tell everyone you meet to come to the banquet.' They went out on the streets and brought in everyone they could find, good and bad alike. And the banquet room was filled with guests."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reflection

Everyone Is Invited

When Jesus talks about God's Kingdom it is sometimes hard to understand what he is trying to tell us. That's because we don't always look at things the way God does. But Jesus always does and he tries to help us do it too.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us a story. Imagine that it was your birthday and you invited your very best friends. When the day came for the party, they all called to say they weren't coming. Everything was already set and prepared, so your mom suggested that you call some other people. They would not be your best friends, but they would be people you knew slightly. They were mostly people who didn't have many friends or were new to the area, and each of them appreciated getting an invitation. All of them came and you had fun getting to know them. It was not the party you planned, but it turned out to be a great party anyway.

How do you think the people who came to your party felt? Do you think they left wanting to be better friends with you?

What about the friends who did not come? Do you think they felt sorry about missing the party? What do you think they felt when they heard about how nice the party was?

Let's think about what happened. The king in the story invited people to his party. He was sorry they couldn't come but he didn't cancel the party. He just invited other people because he knew he wanted to share his happiness. If it couldn't be with the first group, it could be with the second.

What could Jesus be trying to teach us about God?

God wants everyone to be happy with him forever in heaven. That is part of what God's Kingdom is about. God invites us to be with him in this great celebration in the Kingdom. But it is up to us to say yes or no. God just continues to invite more and more people to share his joy.

But how do we know we are invited?

When we are baptized, we already are a part of God's Kingdom. When we learn from the Bible, when we go to Mass, when we act like followers of Jesus, we know that we are living as people in God's Kingdom. Keep learning about Jesus and about all his teachings, and keep praying.

Two Banquets, Two Tables

You will need pictures of a wedding banquet and of the altar at Mass to lead this activity.

A wedding banquet is a very fancy event. Show the children pictures of one, pointing out the tablecloth, place settings, candles and flowers, and tableware. Now, show the children that the Mass is also like a banquet. The altar is set with a beautiful cloth, candles, and shiny cups and plates. Sometimes flowers and plants decorate the altar. At this special banquet, Jesus is the one who invites us to share his special meal. Ask the children to pay attcntion to the altar in your parish and to tell you what it looked like the next time you meet.

Who Will Be on Your List?

Ask the children to imagine that they will be holding a banquet. Whom would they invite? Make a list of the answers on the board. They might begin with their family and friends. Then, remind them that in Jesus' story, other people were invited to the banquet too. Ask them to consider:

- those who have very little food to eat
- those with no homes or children from another country who don't have a place to live (refugees)
- older people who are lonely
- people with disabilities

Encourage more suggestions. Even though this banquet won't actually take place, give the children an idea of how many people would be a part of it and how different they would all be. That is what heaven will be like. Talk about heaven as a banquet where everyone who wants to be with God is invited and where everyone celebrates and is happy forever.

We Can Feed the Hungry

You will need to coordinate with a food pantry or shelter who will take the children's food donations to lead this activity. You will also need drawing paper and coloring materials. Prepare letters for parents with details about the food drive.

The king in the Gospel story invited his friends to a wedding. When they did not come, he went out and found other people in the streets to fill the banquet hall. Let the children know that many people in our towns and cities live on the streets and have no permanent place to live. They rely on others to help them and to get food. Talk about how your class can help provide food for the poor and hungry.

Have the children draw a picture of their favorite food. Under the picture help them print the words, "I can help feed the hungry," and write their first names. Collect the pictures and give each child a take-home letter for the parents asking for a donation of one canned or boxed item. The children will bring it to the next class meeting. Organize the children's donations with their drawings and deliver the box to your selected organization.

Living the Liturgy at Home

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Scripture Readings
Isaiah 25:6–10a
Psalm 23:1–3a, 3b–4, 5, 6
Philippians 4:12–14, 19–20
Matthew 22:1–14 or 22:1–10

Prayer

Lord our God,
you sent your Son into the world
to live with us as one of us,
to heal, to teach, to sanctify,
and to proclaim the Good News
of the coming of the Kingdom.
Help us to live our Baptism to the full
and to find ways to do what Jesus did:
to bring joy and life wherever we go,
to lift up the suffering,
and to tell other people
about the new life Jesus has
brought us.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Did You Know?

. . . that an excellent way to prepare for Sunday Mass is by spending time reflecting on the Scriptures that will be proclaimed that week, especially the Gospel? As you meditate on the Gospel, imagine yourself in the story. Identifying with a particular person and his or her relationship with Jesus suggests ways in which we might strengthen our friendship with Christ.

Conversation Questions

The people invited to the wedding were friends of the king. What could have been more important than joining him for his celebration? Jesus himself invites us to share his banquet each week at Mass. How can we be sure always to attend Mass?

Think about your own parish community. Does it actively recruit, form, and support people to share the Good News of God's love for all?

Faith in Action

Today's Gospel story tells us about expanding the hospitality of our table to include those beyond our own family. Invite someone new to share dinner with your family. You might invite a work colleague, a classmate and his or her parents, the person you always meet at the gym, grocery store, or coffee shop. This offers your family a chance to get to know someone new and welcome him or her to your table. Consider creating a special invitation to the guest.

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

God Works through Human Hands

Focus: To give God that which belongs to him.

Catechist's Context

It is not always easy to distinguish where our duties to God lie. Sometimes they overlap with our ordinary lives. Sometimes we must stand in opposition to a society that challenges our faith. Ultimately, everything belongs to God.

Focus on Church Teaching

Civil laws and authorities exist for the good of the people they govern. They cannot violate fundamental human rights or require people to act immorally. Citizens have a right not to follow such laws (CCC, 2242), understanding that there may be consequences. Human authorities must not claim for themselves what belongs to God, in whose image all people are made. People must give their primary obedience to God (CSDC, 379). Human beings must not seek wealth and power at the cost of eternal life (SRS, 29).

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Help the children find today's date on the liturgical calendar. Point out what feast days are coming up this week. As a group, choose one saint to read more about (see pages vi–viii for more information about the saints). How do we know that this saint belonged to God? How do we know that we are children of God?

Sign of the Cross

All stand and make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gospel Acclamation

Philippians 2:15d, 16a

Alleluia, alleluia.
Shine on the world like bright stars;
you are offering it the word of life.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 22:15–21

Refer to page xii for citations to the standard Lectionary.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

The Pharisees got together and planned how they could trick Jesus into saying something wrong. They sent some of their followers and some of Herod's followers to say to him, "Teacher we know that you are honest. You teach the truth about what God wants people to do. And you treat everyone with the same respect, no matter who they are. Tell us what you think! Should we pay taxes to the Emperor or not?"

Jesus knew their evil thoughts and said, "Why are you trying to test me? You showoffs! Let me see one of the coins used for paying taxes."

They brought him a silver coin, and he asked, "Whose picture and name are on it?"

"The Emperor's," they answered.

Then Jesus told them, "Give the Emperor what belongs to him and give God what belongs to God."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reflection

Be a Child of God

You might bring various coins to show the children.

Do you like to solve puzzles?

Do you like to try to find the answer to a tricky question?

Jesus was very good at both these things. Because some people didn't like what Jesus was doing—even though he was always doing good, doing what God wanted him to do—they often tried to trick him into admitting something bad. In the time of Jesus, everyone who was ruled by the Romans had to pay taxes to the Roman government. Many people thought it wasn't fair because the Romans did not treat the Jewish people well. Your parents pay taxes today and this money helps our government to run. But you and your parents benefit from paying this money. You ride on good roads, for example, and have use of libraries. Though Jewish people had to pay taxes, they did not benefit like you and your families do today.

So in today's Gospel, the Jewish leaders wanted to know if it was fair that the Jewish people had to pay taxes. If Jesus said yes, the rulers would tell everyone that Jesus was on the side of the Romans, which would make everyone angry. If Jesus said no, the rulers would tell the Romans and Jesus would be in trouble; he might even go to jail. How could Jesus get out of this puzzle? How could he answer it? Jesus had the perfect answer. He asked to see a coin and he asked whose picture was on the coin.
(Show the children some coins.)

Look at some of our coins/money. Whose pictures are on a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, and dollar?

In Jesus' day, the coins featured the picture of the emperor, who was the leader of the Romans. He was like our president. So Jesus said, if the money has the emperor's face on it, that money belongs to the emperor. But Jesus said something even smarter. He said if you give to the emperor what belongs to him, then you also have to give to God what belongs to God. We belong to God. Just like the symbols on the money, the signs of Baptism mark each of us as a child of God. We can be good citizens and good Christians. We just have to remember to be fair and honest with everyone. And, most important, we must always remember to act as a child of God.

How will people know that you are a child of God?

What actions will show them who you belong to?

We Are Children of God

You will need various coins and paper money and some symbols of Baptism to lead this activity.

This is an interesting story that has some concrete connections for the children. Gather samples of coins and paper money. Explain to the children that the people and symbols on our money represent past presidents, government leaders, and important places in our government. God marks us too with signs that we belong to God. At Baptism, we are marked with the Sign of the Cross, using water and oil. We are also given a candle, which represents the Light of Jesus Christ. We are to take this light to everyone we meet: to do good things and bring light to people who are sad, lonely, or frightened, using the gifts God gives us. Ask the children how they can specifically bring light to others.

This Little Light of Mine

You will need to be familiar with the words and melody of the song "This Little Light of Mine" to lead this activity.

The children may be familiar with the song, "This Little Light of Mine." (If not, teach them how to sing it. You might allow them to listen to a recording.) After they have sung a few of the verses, have the children name the places where God's light needs to shine and modify the lyrics, such as: "All over my neighborhood, I'm gonna let it shine. . . . All throughout our classroom, I'm gonna let it shine. . . . With my brothers and sisters, I'm gonna let it shine. . . . Wherever people are sad, I'm gonna let it shine. . . ." This is a happy song. Be sure to clap and sway!

Everything Belongs to God

You will need to be familiar with the words and melody of "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands" to lead this activity.

In today's Gospel, Jesus says, "Give God what belongs to God." Ask the children to help you make a list of all the things that belong to God (target thirty items) and write them down. Together sing, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands." Continue the song by substituting the words "whole world" with your list items. For example, "He's got big green trees in his hands. . . . He's got boys and girls in his hands."

Living the Liturgy at Home

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Scripture Readings
Isaiah 45:1, 4–6
Psalm 96:1, 3, 4–5, 7–8, 9–10
1 Thessalonians 1:1–5b
Matthew 22:15–21

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
in your holy face
we see the face of God.
Help us to keep our eyes
always fixed on you,
so that in everything we do,
we may be pleasing to you.
May we love you and follow you
all the way to God's Kingdom,
where you live and reign
with God the Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Did You Know?

. . . that modern Catholic Social Teaching is the Church's best kept secret? It really should not be, because it is a wealth of social teaching within the Church dating back to 1891, when Pope Leo XIII issued the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. Catholic Social Teaching focuses on social justice.

Conversation Questions

Jesus tells us there are things we must do for our city, state, and country. What are some of the ways we can show we are faithful citizens?

Jesus tells us there are things we must do as Christians, followers of Jesus. What are some ways we can show we are faithful Christians? Are some things easy? Are some things hard?

Faith in Action

Many parishes struggle financially. Many families struggle financially too. But we are asked not to give of our excess but out of our total resources. Talk about how your family contributes to the parish. What might you have to reduce at home to give more to the church? Discuss how contributions help the parish and help many people in need. Pray for God's help in making the right decisions at all times.

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Imitators of the Lord

Focus: To be a model for believers.

Catechist's Context

Sometimes we are so focused on the particulars of our faith that we forget the big picture. Above all else, God wants us to love God and one another. And to love ourselves too! Specific laws and rules should help us do this, not distract us. Let us ask God to fill our hearts with love for all.

Focus on Church Teaching

Jesus teaches that loving God completely and loving other people in the same way that we love ourselves is the basis of all of God's laws. God made human beings in his image. With that love, they have the capacity to seek justice and peace for each other and for all creation (CIV, 1). Christians should show their love in all their activities, secular or sacred, by acting justly toward all, especially those in need, living in unity with each other, and working together to spread the Gospel (GS, 21).

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Help the children find today's date on the liturgical calendar. Point out what feast days are coming up this week. As a group, choose one saint to read more about (see pages vi–viii for more information about the saints). How did this saint show love for God? How should we show others that we love God?

Sign of the Cross

All stand and make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gospel Acclamation

John 14:23

Alleluia, alleluia.
All who love me will keep my words,
and my Father will love them,
and we will come to them.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 22:34–40

Refer to page xii for citations to the standard Lectionary.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

After Jesus had made the Sadducees look foolish, the Pharisees heard about it and got together. One of them was an expert in the Jewish Law. So he tried to test Jesus by asking, "Teacher, what is the most important commandment in the Law?"

Jesus answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.' This is the first and most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like this one. And it is, 'Love others as much as you love yourself.' All the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets are based on these two commandments."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reflection

Love Is Most Important

Many times in the Gospel stories, we hear about people trying to trick Jesus so they could get him in trouble. They did not like what Jesus had to say. Even though Jesus spoke only what was true and what God wanted them to do, people didn't want to change their actions. This week, we hear Jesus addressing the question of laws and rules.

Do you know what the Ten Commandments are?

The Ten Commandments are laws given to us by God to teach us how to live a good and holy life—in relation to him and to one another. God reminds us to respect God's name always and take time to pray to God. God also reminds us to obey our parents and take care of our health and our bodies. We should never lie or take things that don't belong to us. We should not hurt another person.

Do you think these are good rules to live by?

Which one do you think is the most important rule?

In Jesus' time, the people had many rules to live by—not just the Ten Commandments. So the people in the Gospel wanted to trick Jesus with this question: What is the most important rule? With so many, it didn't matter which one Jesus chose, it would be said that he chose the wrong one. For example, if Jesus said praying to God was the most important, they would reply, "Well what about listening to your parents? Isn't that important too?" Or if Jesus said listening to your parents was the most important, they would reply, "Don't you think God is more important?" So you can see that the challenge put to Jesus was tough but he was ready. He was ready because deep in his heart Jesus always relied on God and listened to God's Word. He knew God would help him find the right answer.

Jesus answered this way: Love God and love your neighbor. What a great answer! In this one answer, Jesus combined all the laws. He told these people that loving God and loving the people around you are equally important! You can't do one and ignore the other. You have to do both. Doesn't that make sense? If we love God, we will show it by being kind and fair and helpful to our family, friends, and neighbors. If we love our neighbors and family by always telling the truth, being respectful of others, and taking care of ourselves, we will be showing our love for God because that is what God asks us to do and we are obeying his commandments. Nothing is more important than showing love to God and showing love to one another!

What a good model Jesus is for us! Even when people tried to trick him or get him into trouble, he did not get mad at them or say mean things. He took some time to think about what God would want him to do, what God would want him to say, and he answered them with kindness. We can do the same. If someone says mean things to us, don't answer right away. Stop, think about what God would want us to do, and then answer with kindness and truth. Isn't that what love is about?

The Greatest Commandment

You will need an outline of two tablets like those often represented with the Ten Commandments to lead this activity. On one tablet write "Love God," and on the other tablet write, "Love your neighbor and yourself." Make enough copies for each child.

Talk about rules. What are the rules in your classroom? Ask the children to share what rules they follow at home. Remind them that God has given us rules too. They are important and they help us become saints. Explain to the children that their parents should help them write down what they did to love God and what they did to love themselves or their neighbors throughout their daily activities. Tell them they will do this for one week and then bring back their completed sheets. Spend some time reviewing what the families had noted.

Loving Others through Daily Actions

You will need to bring photographs of people helping others in order to lead this activity. You might bring a photo of a child helping a younger sibling, of a doctor providing care to someone, of a missionary doing work in a poverty-stricken place, of a parent helping a child with homework, and so on. You will also need old magazines, scissors, glue or tape, two large sheets of poster board or butcher paper, and drawing paper and coloring materials.

For this two-part activity, the children will work to create collages of ways that people show their love of God through love of neighbor.

First, show the children the pictures you brought. Ask the children what is happening in the pictures, and explain that we show love for others by what we say and do each day. God loves us all very much, and we are called to share God's love with others by treating them with kindness and helping them in whatever way we can. Give the children magazines and scissors, and have them locate and cut out pictures that show people helping others. Younger children might not be able to use scissors; they can identify the pictures and then you can cut them out. After the children have finished finding and cutting photos, help them glue them on one of the poster boards. You can label this collage "Loving Others . . . "

Then, ask the children about the ways they can show love for their family and friends. Discuss how our love for others also shows our love for God, and how our love for God leads to a greater love for others. Distribute the drawing paper and coloring materials, and invite each child to draw a picture of himself or herself showing love or kindness for family or a friend. Have them cut their drawings out and glue them to the second poster board. Label this collage " . . . through Daily Actions."

Display these collages together in your gathering space or in the hallway for all to see how we can show our love for God by loving our neighbors.

Living the Liturgy at Home

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Scripture Readings
Exodus 22:20–26
Psalm 18:2–3, 3–4, 47, 51
1 Thessalonians 1:5c–10
Matthew 22:34–40

Prayer

Lord our God,
just as the rain comes down
to water the earth
and make it fruitful,
so you send forth your word
to do your will in the world.
May this wisdom from heaven
take root in our hearts
and bear fruit in holy words
and loving deeds.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Did You Know?

. . . that in the First Letter of John, God is identified as Love? "God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him" (1 John 4:16). The original Greek in which this letter was written uses the word *agape* for love. *Agape* is a type of love that can be described as a pure self-gift to another.

Conversation Questions

God's law is simple, but it is not always easy. We are asked to love God above all else. How can we do this? What makes it hard to do this every day?

We are also asked to love our neighbor as ourselves. This might seem strange. First, how do we show love for ourselves? Then, how do we love others as we want them to love us?

Faith in Action

Show God your great love for him by taking your family to visit Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament or attending a weekday Mass. Show love for your neighbor by visiting someone who might be lonely, preparing a meal for someone in need, or performing another act of personal service. Try to find an activity that everyone in the family can participate in. Afterward, reflect on the experience together —allow your child to express his or her thoughts on how the actions correspond to what Jesus asks of us in today's Gospel. Give thanks and praise to God for the grace to be his compassion in the world.

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Greatest Shall Be a Servant

Focus: To give glory to the name of God.

Catechist's Context

As catechists and teachers, you have a great responsibility in teaching the young about our faith and leading them to a deeper relationship with God. In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds us that we are all in the service of God and we should be at the service of others, even as we lead them to Christ.

Focus on Church Teaching

Jesus teaches the people to follow the lessons of the religious authorities of their day but not to follow their example, for their actions do not match their teaching. He directs his disciples, who will teach in his name, to be humble and to be the servants of all. Christ continues to teach us today through the Church. The faithful obey the Church's teaching authority because it has been handed to us in an unbroken succession since the time of the Apostles (CCC, 87, 91, 93, 892, 2037).

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Help the children find today's date on the liturgical calendar. Point out what feast days are coming up this week. As a group, choose one saint to read more about (see pages vi–viii for more information about the saints). How did this saint put the needs of others first? How can we be just as selfless?

Sign of the Cross

All stand and make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gospel Acclamation

Matthew 23:9b, 10b

Alleluia, alleluia.

You have one Father, your Father in heaven; you have one teacher, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 23:1–12

Refer to page xii for citations to the standard Lectionary.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law are experts in the Law of Moses. So obey everything they teach you, but don't do as they do. After all, they say one thing and do something else.

"They pile heavy burdens on people's shoulders and won't lift a finger to help them. Everything they do is just to show off in front of others. They even make a big show of wearing Scripture verses on their foreheads and arms, and they wear big tassels for everyone to see. They love the best seats at banquets and the front seats in the meeting places. And when they are in the market, they like to have people greet them as their teachers.

"But none of you should be called a teacher. You have only one teacher, and all of you are like brothers and sisters. Don't call anyone on earth your father. All of you have the same Father in heaven. None of you should be called the leader. The Messiah is your only leader.

"Whoever is the greatest should be the servant of the others. If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honored."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reflection

Who Is the Greatest?

Who is the greatest person you know? Is it someone in your family? Is it someone who is famous or a leader in the world?

What makes a person great? Does he do impossible things? Does she live in fancy palaces or drive fast cars? Does he have a lot of money or have his picture in the papers or magazines? Is she an athlete?

In today's Gospel passage, how did Jesus define a great person?

Jesus thinks the greatest person is one who serves others, one who puts other people first and is always thinking, "What can I do to help my mom or dad or friend or teacher?" Jesus' idea of what it means to be great is not the same as what most people think is great. So, how can we make sure that we are great in the eyes of Jesus? In the reading today, he gives us some ideas of how we should act. Always make sure your actions match your words. If you tell people to share, you should share too. Don't always try to be the first one in line or the one always picked to do special things in the classroom or at home. Try to think of how others feel. Let everyone have a chance to be first. Let everyone take a turn doing fun things in school or at home.

The most important idea that Jesus shares with us is: if we want to be great, we have to be willing to serve others. Do you think Jesus is right? Think about some of the people who we think are great.

The pope is a great person. He is the one who leads all Catholics. How does he serve all the people in the Church?

What about your teacher? your parent? your coach? We think these people are great. What do they do to help and serve others?

Do you want to be great? What will you have to do to become great?

Jesus says, "Serve others." How will you do that today?

Thanks for All You Do!

You will need a thank-you card that can be signed by all the children to lead this activity.

In the Gospel passage, Jesus tells us that the people who are greatest are those who serve others. Ask children to name people who live their lives serving the needs of others. This list would certainly begin with their parents and include teachers, priests, doctors, firefighters and police, coaches, nurses, etc.

In your parish the priest is the servant of all those who belong to your local church. Invite the children to give examples of what the priests do. Make a card(s) thanking your priest(s) for serving your parish community. Then, have each child sign his or her name. Deliver it to the rectory or arrange with the recipient for a time when the whole class or a few representatives can deliver it themselves.

Invite a Guest

You will need to arrange to have a parish leader visit your class to speak about servant leadership.

This week, invite your pastor, principal, director of faith formation, or other parish leader to visit with your group. Ask them to talk about how it feels to know that, because they're teachers and leaders, they have to be sure to be a good example always. Ask them to tell the children how their leadership position requires them to serve people. Ask them to talk about how important it is for leaders to pray to God for strength and grace. Is it hard to be a leader and teacher? Do they ever wish they didn't have to be role models? How can young children be servant leaders?

Great People Teach Me about God

You will need paper and coloring materials to lead this activity. In advance, prepare four-page booklets (8½" × 11" size sheets folded in half and stapled at the folds).

Help the children create a booklet titled "These People Teach Me about God." Write the title on the board for the children to copy. Then, have children think of four people who have taught them something about God. Hand out the prepared booklets. On the inside pages ask them to draw a picture of someone who has taught them something about God. For example, a picture of a mother with the words, "Mommy teaches me to pray." Encourage the children to take the booklets home and share them with their parents.

Living the Liturgy at Home

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Scripture Readings
Malachi 1:14b—2:2b, 8–10
Psalm 131:1, 2, 3
1 Thessalonians 2:7b–9, 13
Matthew 23:1–12

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
in your holy face
we see the face of God.
Help us to keep our eyes
always fixed on you,
so that in everything we do,
we may be pleasing to you.
May we love you and follow you
all the way to God's Kingdom,
where you live and reign
with God the Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Did You Know?

. . . that St. Clare of Assisi, even though she was born into wealth and comfort, humbled herself to become a religious sister after meeting St. Francis? In the middle of the night, she left her parents' home and exchanged her rich clothing for a simple habit. Francis cut all of her hair off. St. Clare spent her life barefoot, owning nothing, and devoting herself to prayer and service of God.

Conversation Questions

Many say they follow Jesus but their actions don't support that claim. Who really shows us how to live as Jesus did?

Jesus says the greatest people are those who serve others. Who serves other people without even being asked? How do they do this? Do you do this?

Faith in Action

We often hear that "actions speak louder than words." This week, discuss what this means for your family. Talk about ways that each member of your family might set a better example of all that you believe and profess. Choose one value that you hold dear and decide on a way that you can give strong witness to that value this week. Pray for the grace to follow through. At the end of the week, discuss the impact that conscious awareness of your role as witnesses to your values had on you.

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Longing for the Living God

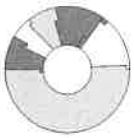
Focus: To wait for God in faithfulness.

Catechist's Context

We are all invited to the wedding feast of heaven, but something is required of each of us. Our response cannot only be yes without preparing to become part of the celebration. We must be vigilant, prepared, and faithful to the end. We cannot rely on others to do our part. We must do what only we can do.

Focus on Church Teaching

Jesus promised to return to earth in glory, in the fullness of time, to gather the faithful into the Kingdom of heaven. Today's parable instructs us to wait faithfully, tirelessly, and wisely, for he may come at any time. Although Christ is still present in us, his Church (CCC, 669), under the power of the Holy Spirit, who guides the Church through this time of suffering, helps us witness to the coming Christ, and sustains us as we watch and wait (CCC, 671–72).



Liturgical Calendar Connection

Help the children find today's date on the liturgical calendar. Point out what feast days are coming up this week. As a group, choose one saint to read more about (see pages vi–viii for more information about the saints). In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds us that we need to be prepared to welcome him. How did this saint welcome Jesus by welcoming others? How do you get ready to welcome other people?

Sign of the Cross

All stand and make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gospel Acclamation

Matthew 24:42a, 44

Alleluia, alleluia.
Be watchful and ready:
you know not when the Son of Man is coming.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 25:1–13

Refer to page xii for citations to the standard Lectionary.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus told his disciples this story about the kingdom of heaven:

"The kingdom of heaven is like what happened one night when ten girls took their oil lamps and went to a wedding to meet the groom. Five of the girls were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps, but no extra oil. The ones who were wise took along extra oil for their lamps.

"The groom was late arriving, and the girls became drowsy and fell asleep. Then in the middle of the night someone shouted, 'Here's the groom! Come to meet him!'

"When the girls got up and started getting their lamps ready, the foolish ones said to the others, 'Let us have some of your oil! Our lamps are going out.'

"The girls who were wise answered, 'There's not enough oil for all of us! Go and buy some for yourselves.'

"While the foolish girls were on their way to get some oil, the groom arrived. The girls who were ready went into the wedding, and the doors were closed. Later the other girls returned and shouted, "Sir! Sir! Open the door for us!'

"But the groom replied, 'I don't even know you!'

"So, my disciples, always be ready! You don't know the day or the time when all this will happen."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reflection

Be Wise!

This is a great story about a wedding. Jesus is teaching us something about the Kingdom of God. In this story, ten girls are waiting for the groom. Sometimes these girls are called bridesmaids. They are not like the other guests at the wedding. They are specially chosen by the bride to help her in the celebration.

Five of these girls were wise. What does *wise* mean?

Five of these girls were foolish. What does it mean to be foolish?

The girls were assigned to watch out for the groom but they didn't know when he was coming. So, they needed lamps in case it got dark before he came.

What did the wise girls take along with them?

What did the foolish girls forget to take?

The groom was very late and the girls fell asleep while they were waiting for him. When they heard him coming, they got up, but only the wise girls had enough oil to keep their lamps burning. The foolish girls didn't.

What did the foolish girls ask to wise ones to do?

But the wise girls didn't share. That doesn't seem fair, does it? But if the wise ones shared their oil maybe there wouldn't be enough for everyone, and all the lamps would burn out. There would be no light at all! So the foolish girls had to go to the town to buy more oil. While they were gone, the groom came and the wedding started. When they got back, they missed the party. They could not get in. They didn't do anything wrong. They were not bad girls. They just didn't prepare. They didn't do everything they needed to do to be part of the celebration.

Jesus is telling us that each of us is an important person. In order to get to heaven we need to be prepared. We have to work to establish God's Kingdom here on earth. We can do this various ways because each of us has a different talent or gift we can use to do this. Without each of our gifts, it will take a longer time for the Kingdom to come.

What special talents do you have?

How can you share your talents?

Be like the wise girls and use that talent every day. When you do, you are preparing to meet Jesus because you are using the gift that God gave you to help others learn about him. One day you will celebrate with Jesus in God's Kingdom.

Be Prepared

You will need craft sticks, scissors, glue or tape, and coloring materials to lead this activity. You will also need outlines of ten girls, one boy, and five containers of oil sized so they can attach to the craft sticks.

Does your class partner with an older grade? Is there a teacher that would like to share this activity with you and at the same time teach older students about the Gospel story? Plan to have students in an upper grade prepare puppets or paper figures that can be attached to craft sticks. Have them draw ten bridesmaids holding lamps, and the bridegroom. They should also draw five flasks for the oil reserve.

With more effort, this activity can be done in reverse with your students presenting the story for a group of older children. Have them color and cut out the figures. Attach them to the craft sticks. Help them with the dialogue and allow enough practice time for them to feel comfortable with the presentation.

Keep Your Lamps Burning

You will need to do research on lamps of ancient Israel and make a simple drawing of it to lead this activity. You might find an actual lamp or have pictures to show the children.

The lamps in the Gospel are not the kinds that are familiar to the children. Most children are familiar with candles. They know that as the wax burns, the candle becomes smaller. Explain that, just as the wick inside the wax fuels the candle, the oil that is referred to in the Gospel is the fuel for the lamp. So as the lamp burns, it slowly runs out of oil. You might also use the example of batteries in a flashlight. When the energy in the battery is spent, the flashlight does not turn on.

In the days of Jesus, people used oil lamps for light when it was dark. There were no electric lights. Keeping the lamps burning was very important. That is why the wise girls had extra oil and the foolish ones had to go to the market to buy oil to make their lamps burn again. Just like the ten girls, we have to be prepared and shine ourselves for Jesus.

Light the Lamp

You will need coloring materials and tape or a stapler to lead this activity. Prepare enough light-colored construction paper outlines of lamps and flames (already precut) for each child.

Distribute the paper lamps to the children and help them write their names on them. Give them a few minutes to decorate their lamps. Explain that, like the ten girls in the Gospel passage, we are given a task to wait for Jesus and to light the way for him. You may want to think of examples with them [sharing, playing with others, listening to parents, being kind to siblings, going to church, etc.]. Give them the paper flames and help them to attach them to their lamps. Invite the children to take home their lamps to remind themselves to pray, to do good works, and to keep learning the stories of Jesus Christ. These actions will keep their "flames" alive.

Living the Liturgy at Home

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Scripture Readings

Wisdom 6:12–16

Psalm 63:2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 or 4:13–14

Matthew 25:1–13

Prayer

Lord our God,
you sent your Son into the world
to live with us as one of us,
to heal, to teach, to sanctify,
and to proclaim the Good News
of the coming of the Kingdom.
Help us to live our Baptism to the full
and to find ways to do what Jesus did:
to bring joy and life wherever we go,
to lift up the suffering,
and to tell other people
about the new life Jesus has
brought us.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Did You Know?

. . . that even though we do not use this type of language regularly, Catholics are born again? Through the waters of Baptism, we experience a new birth in Christ. This new birth washes away all sin, including Original Sin, and we become members of the Mystical Body of Christ alive and well in the world.

Conversation Questions

On first hearing, this story seems unfair. Shouldn't the wise girls share their oil? We must take responsibility with our lives, however, if we want to get to heaven. What do you think you must do?

Each one of us has something special to offer the world. What gifts and talents does each of your family members have?

Faith in Action

Jesus once told us that we are the "light of the world" (Matthew 5:14–16). And so, we need to spread our light, not keep it hidden. Today's Gospel also reminds us that we need to be ready at all times to shine our light to welcome Jesus into our lives. Discuss as a family how you can shine light in the dark places of the world. Can you contribute to an organization that helps others, bring food to a food pantry, or donate clothes to Salvation Army or Goodwill? Choose an activity that uses the gifts God has blessed you with, and give him thanks and praise as you reflect his light to the world.

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Stay Alert, Children of the Light!

Focus: To make use of everything God gives us.

Catechist's Context

As we near the end of the liturgical year, we are reminded that we have been entrusted with God's work. Before we can make use of our talents, we must recognize what they are. For some of us this is very difficult to do. Often we need the help of others to identify our own gifts. Help the children find their own talents. Then encourage them to use them in service to others.

Focus on Church Teaching

The Church has been given the mission of carrying out Christ's mission until he returns in glory. While the earliest Christians may have believed that his return would come soon, we know that it did not. Christ may still not come again for many more years, but we are still to carry out his mission to humbly preach the Gospel as he did, primarily to the poor, in service and sacrifice (AG, 5). We are to be good stewards, increasing what the Master has entrusted to us (CCC, 2280) with joy (CIV, 78).

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Help the children find today's date on the liturgical calendar. Point out what feast days are coming up this week. As a group, choose one saint to read more about (see pages vi–viii for more information about the saints). Did this saint have a special skill or talent that he or she used to help other people? What are you good at? Do you use your skills or talents to help other people?

Sign of the Cross

All stand and make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gospel Acclamation

John 15:4a, 5b

Alleluia, alleluia.

Live in me and let me live in you, says the Lord; my branches bear much fruit.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 25:14–15, 19–21

Refer to page xii for citations to the standard Lectionary.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus told his disciples this story about the kingdom of God:

"The kingdom is like what happened when a man went away and put his three servants in charge of all he owned. The man knew what each servant could do. So he handed five thousand coins to the first servant, two thousand to the second, and one thousand to the third. Then he left the country.

"Some time later the master of those servants returned. He called them in and asked what they had done with his money. The servant who had been given five thousand coins brought them in with the five thousand that he had earned. He said, 'Sir, you gave me five thousand coins, and I have earned five thousand more.'

"'Wonderful!' his master replied, 'You are a good and faithful servant. I left you in charge of only a little, but now I will put you in charge of much more. Come and share in my happiness!'"

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reflection

Talents—Use Them or Lose Them

Jesus tells us many stories about the Kingdom of God and what we must do if we want to be a part of it. This is another story that helps us understand what God is asking of us. Remember what the master did in the Gospel passage? He gave each of his servants something before he left on his trip.

Did he give each servant the same amount? [No.]

Why do you think he gave each a different number of coins? [because each servant was different and he knew what each of them was capable of]

Did the master give them any instructions about what to do with what he gave them? [No.]

So what did the servants have to do? [They each had to figure out on their own what the master wanted them to do.]

The servant who was given the most decided to use what the master gave him in the best way possible. Although this might have been a big challenge for the servant, he wanted to please his master. He had to think hard about what the master might want. When the master returned, he called the servant and asked him what he had done with what he was given. When the servant reported to the master on what he had done, the master was pleased with the servant and wanted to reward him. The master told the servant that he had done a good job with what he was given. Since he had been responsible, the master was going to trust him with even greater things. That made the master happy and it made the servant happy. They shared their joy together.

What do you think Jesus is trying to teach us?

Each of us has been given certain gifts and talents by God. Talents are things that we are good at and enjoy doing, like being good at sports or music or art or coming up with stories. God gave us these skills so that we can help others. If we don't use the gifts and talents we have been blessed with, they don't benefit us and they don't benefit others. We are wasting God's gift to us.

Do you know what talents you have? Can you name them?

Can you name some of the talents of other people in your class, among your friends?

What do you think God wants you to do with your talent? to hide it or use it?

We Give Thanks for Our Gifts!

You will need a sheet with five circles (of different sizes) drawn on it to lead this activity. Make enough copies for each child on card stock or thick paper. You will also need scissors, hole punch, string or yarn, a dowel and coloring materials.

Have the children write or draw what they do well inside the circles. When the children have filled in their circles, help them write their names on the reverse side and cut them out. Punch holes at the tops of the circles and attach a length of string or yarn. Soon, you will have a collection of "talents" to display and hang. End the art activity with a prayer, thanking God for giving us each our own great, unique gifts.

Intercession

Explain that one gift God has given everyone is the ability to pray for those in need. Intercession is a special kind of prayer that we say for others, not for ourselves. Invite the children to take turns naming things or people for whom they'd like to pray. Teach the children to respond, "Lord, hear our prayer," or the response that you use in your parish masses during the intercessions.

Occupations

You will need several pictures of people working at familiar occupations (e.g., office worker, teacher, doctor, firefighter, police officer, priest, etc.), paper, and coloring materials to lead this activity.

Ask the children what occupations and what talents their parents and family members must have in order to do their jobs. Show the children the pictures of the different workers; ask them to identify the occupation of each. Describe some of the talents and skills these people must have in order to do their jobs.

Next, ask the children about their likes and dislikes, what they enjoy and are good at, and what they feel they need to practice or do better in. Although they are still young, they will know whether they enjoy the outdoors or drawing or helping their family in the kitchen. If some already might have an idea of what they would like to do when they grow up, invite them to share. Then distribute paper and coloring materials, and invite the children to draw pictures of themselves in their future occupations. Be sure to touch on how the children might use their skills and talents to build God's Kingdom.

Living the Liturgy at Home

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Scripture Readings

Proverbs 31:10–13, 19–20, 30–31

Psalm 128:1–2, 3, 4–5

1 Thessalonians 5:1–6

Matthew 25:14–30 or 25:14–15, 19–21

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
you said to the Apostles,
"Come, follow me."
You say the same words to us,
today and every day.
Help us to follow you faithfully:
to walk in the way of your
commandments,
to help those who are struggling,
and to love all people
as you love them.
May we rejoice in your presence
with us
as we work to build up
the Kingdom of God,
where you live and reign
with the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Did You Know?

. . . that there are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit? They are wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord (which is the feeling of wonder and awe before God). When one is confirmed, the bishop or priest says, "Receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit," as he anoints the one being confirmed.

Conversation Questions

What are your talents? How can you increase them and use them to serve others?

Can you identify talents in other people who might not see them in themselves? Name a talent that you see in each member of your family. You might also want to name some in your friends.

Faith in Action

This Sunday's Gospel offers an opportunity for discernment. It is usually done in community because the different perspectives of different members give a more rounded evaluation than one person can achieve alone. It is not too early to talk with your child about his or her own gifts and talents that you have already noticed in him or her. You might share how you learned of your own preferences and talents and the work you have done in your life to help them grow. You might add when developing them was fun or when it was challenging. Mention those who have encouraged and helped you along the way: mentors, family members, and friends.

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

The Shepherd King Will Judge Rightly

Focus: To see Christ in those who are in need.

Catechist's Context

This liturgical year ends with the image of our Lord as shepherd king, bringing a reign of justice. Incarnate among the poorest, like a shepherd observing from within the flock, Christ has experienced how each of us treats those who are counted as least. Revealed as king, he judges us accordingly.

Focus on Church Teaching

Jesus preached to the poor and sent his disciples to carry out his mission of spreading God's Good News. The measure that will decide whether we enter God's Kingdom is whether we have fed the hungry and cared for those In need. The Church refers to the acts that Jesus describes as the corporal works of mercy (CCC, 2447). We are called not only to care for individuals but also to address structural causes of poverty (CIV, 27), keeping in mind the Church's preferential option for the poor (TMA, 51).

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Help the children find today's date on the liturgical calendar. Today is the last Sunday of the liturgical year. Next Sunday, the First Sunday of Advent, the next liturgical year will begin. Today's solemnity reminds us that even as we are getting ready for Advent and Christmas Time, we must also prepare ourselves for the second coming of Christ at the end of time, when he will bring about the Kingdom of God on earth.

Sign of the Cross

All stand and make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gospel Acclamation

Mark 11:9, 10

Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed is the one who inherits the kingdom of David our father;
blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 25:31–46

Refer to page xii for citations to the standard Lectionary.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory with all of his angels, he will sit on his royal throne.

"The people of all nations will be brought before him, and he will separate them, as shepherds separate their sheep from the goats.

"He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'My father has blessed you! Come and

receive the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world was created. When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat, and when I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was a stranger, you welcomed me, and when I was naked, you gave me clothes to wear. When I was sick, you took care of me, and when I was in jail, you visited me.'

"Then the ones who pleased the Lord will ask, 'When did we give you something to eat or drink? When did we welcome you as a stranger or give you clothes to wear or visit you while you were sick or in jail?'

"The king will answer, 'Whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me.'

"Then the king will say to those on his left, 'Get away from me! You are under God's curse. Go into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels! I was hungry, but you did not give me anything to eat, and I was thirsty, but you did not give me anything to drink. I was a stranger, but you did not welcome me, and I was naked, but you did not give me any clothes to wear. I was sick and in jail, but you did not take care of me.'

"Then the people will ask, 'Lord, when did we fail to help you when you were hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in jail?'

"The king will say to them, 'Whenever you failed to help any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you failed to do it for me.' "

Then Jesus said, "Those people will be punished forever. But the ones who pleased God will have eternal life."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reflection

Entering God's Kingdom

This is the last Sunday in the Church year. Next Sunday we will begin a new year! It does not begin on January 1. It begins on the First Sunday of Advent. Before the new year begins, we always take time to think about Jesus, our king, and to honor him. This is a solemnity called Christ the King. Today is a good time to think about what we would say if we stood before Jesus our King and he asked us some questions. What do you think Jesus would ask us? Do you think he would ask us how much money we have? Would he ask us if we are famous or popular? Are those things very important to Jesus? No.

This Gospel tells us that the most important thing Jesus will ask us is whether we loved other people as much as God loves us.

How would you answer him if he asked you that?

Of course, you love your family and your friends, and it is good when you treat them well and show them your love and kindness. It gets a little tougher when you have to show that same love to people you don't know.

How would you respond if your classmate didn't have enough food at lunchtime and was feeling hungry?

Jesus says if we see someone hungry or thirsty and give them food and drink, we are also doing the same for Jesus because God loves every person very much.

How would you respond if you saw some children who lost their homes to a natural disaster—like a flood or tornado or fire—and they lost all they had?

Jesus says if we see someone without a home or clothes to wear and give them shelter and clothing, we are also doing the same for Jesus.

How would you respond if you knew there were many people in the hospital or nursing home and they were lonely and had no one visiting them?

Jesus says if we visit the sick and lonely, we are also doing the same for Jesus.

Jesus would then say, because we did those things, we could come into God's Kingdom and be with God and Jesus forever! Does that make you want to try to help the people who need it? I hope so, because Jesus says if we do see them and *don't* help, it would be just like *not* helping Jesus. And we wouldn't want to do that. If we want to be a part of God's Kingdom, we need to show our love for God by loving all people. Let's make a plan for how we can do that in the new year!

God's Kingdom Is Filled with Love

You will need pictures of crowns, fancy robes, a palace, gold, and jewels and images of a plate of food, a cup or glass of water, a plain dress or shirt, a get-well card, and a modest house to lead this activity. You might wish to add images of people showing affection and love and some negative images of people arguing or fighting.

Invite the children to look at the various images and decide which objects would be part of God's Kingdom and which would not. The goal is to recognize that God's Kingdom is not like that of earthly kings with fancy things and riches. God's Kingdom includes all people who share and help one another. It is a Kingdom rich in love.

Corporal Works of Mercy

You will need a board or a sheet of newsprint to lead this activity. Do research on practical ways very young children can do the corporal works of mercy.

Talk with the children about the things that Jesus said we should be doing in today's Gospel. These actions are the basis for the corporal works of mercy. Share with them that the corporal works of mercy are an important part of living out our faith in Jesus. They remind us how we are supposed to treat others and show us that everyone is special to God.

With the children, think of ways they can live out these works of mercy. Write down the children's ideas and keep the list so that you can refer to it in the future.

Each month, select one of the suggestions as a class and put it into practice. Do a different work of mercy each month.

Welcome the Stranger

You will need paper bookmarks and coloring materials to lead this activity.

Talk with your parish office staff about this project. Ask permission to make bookmarks to welcome visitors to your parish. On your own or with your parish office, design a simple bookmark with an appropriate greeting and parish information, being sure to leave enough room for the children to decorate them. Make copies and cut them out. Talk with the children about how welcoming strangers was one of the virtues Jesus mentioned, and discuss how it feels to know that you are welcome in a new place. Let the children decorate the bookmarks and put them out where visitors will see them. You may also want to invite someone who is new to your community to visit and talk with the children about how they felt when they first came.

Living the Liturgy at Home

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Scripture Readings
Ezekiel 34:11–12, 15–17
Psalm 23:1–2, 2–3, 5–6
1 Corinthians 15:20–26, 28
Matthew 25:31–46

Prayer

Lord our God,
just as the rain comes down
to water the earth
and make it fruitful,
so you send forth your word
to do your will in the world.
May this wisdom from heaven
take root in our hearts
and bear fruit in holy words
and loving deeds.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Did You Know?

. . . that Pope Pius XI made Christ the King a feast day on the Church's calendar in 1925? This feast day marks the end of the liturgical year and it calls to mind that, although there are rulers, heads of state, and other government officials throughout the earth, our one true King rules heaven and earth and the Kingdom of God will reign for all times.

Conversation Questions

Today we honor Christ our King! Jesus is not like the kings of this world. How would you describe Jesus as King? How would you describe the Kingdom of God?

Why does Jesus want us to help everyone, even the people who live far away and those we have never met?

Faith in Action

Think about someone in your extended family, circle of friends, or neighborhood who might need a break from the mundane or a stressful situation. Often, we think only of people in dire situations when we think of the needy. There are people in our vicinity, though, who may be physically fine but suffering emotionally or spiritually. Perhaps you know a single mom or someone who is caring for an aging parent who could use a homemade supper. Or perhaps your children know someone who has been having a hard time at school. Talk about ways in which your family can show the love of Christ to these people.