

Children's Liturgy of the Word

Introduction

The term 'Children's Liturgy of the Word' (CLOW) refers to the practice of the children leaving the Sunday assembly during the Liturgy of the Word and gathering elsewhere to celebrate a separate Liturgy of the Word that is more appropriate to their level of understanding. In 1973 the Congregation for Divine Worship's document '*Directory for Masses with Children*' (DMC), offered guidelines and principles for adapting the liturgy for children to enable them to take a more conscious and active part in liturgical celebrations. The purpose of adapting liturgical celebrations to make them more accessible to children must always be to gradually lead them to full, conscious and active participation in the Sunday liturgical assembly.



CLOW is **liturgy**, ritual prayer, and not catechesis (religious instruction) or child minding. Colouring in type activities is not appropriate because it is a liturgical celebration, and all the principles of good liturgy apply – active participation, clear symbols etc.

It is also Liturgy of the **Word**, so it is ritually centred on the proclamation and breaking open of the Scriptures. The children do what the rest of the community is doing at this point of the Mass. They listen to the Scriptures proclaimed and applied to contemporary life and respond in various ways. It is an experience of prayer, of dialogue with God.

Frequency

The DMC states the CLOW may *sometimes* be celebrated separately to enable children to experience liturgy in a manner that is comprehensible to them. Remember that growing up is a gradual process of growing in understanding of the adult world around them. It is essential to embody the unity of a church, which includes children as well as adults, and to lead children to an adult participation in the parish Sunday Mass.

In order to offer children the experience of regularly celebrating all of Mass with the entire community, parishes might consider having a CLOW on alternate Sundays or for set periods only. It is recommended that CLOW should not be scheduled for the major feasts of the Liturgical year, and Liturgy Committees should be aware of the entire assembly being present when planning these

celebrations.

The Scriptures

The approved book of readings for CLOW is the 'Lectionary for Masses with children' (LMC). The LMC adheres as closely as possible to the readings in the Lectionary for Mass, while adapting them to the needs and capabilities of children. It is a simplified version of Scripture – Contemporary English Version (CEV) – not a collection of paraphrases or Bible stories. Some readings have been simplified or omitted altogether. The responsorial psalms have also been simplified.

A liturgy of the word is never simply a verbal experience. The use of symbols, gesture, movement and singing heightens the children's experience of the transcendent. Ideally a bound lectionary is used, handled with respect and suitably enthroned; excellent proclamation and the gathering of the children to listen all speak of the sacredness of God's word and influence how the children will accept and live by it.



Principles for Celebrating Children's Liturgy of the Word

- It must be liturgy. Activity sheets can be useful as take home material for family follow-up, but they are not appropriate to be used during a liturgical celebration.
- Gatherings of children in which the primary focus is religious education, sacramental preparation, or completing activity sheets should be called by an alternative name, such as Sunday School. Only celebrations which parallel the Liturgy of the Word at Mass in structure, content and symbol should be called 'Children's Liturgy of the Word'

- The participants are usually children of primary school age (7-12 years). Children younger than this are generally unable to participate consciously and actively in liturgical celebrations. The role of leaders is to facilitate the liturgy and not to take care of young children. If pre-school aged children are included, scripture-based activities will be more appropriate for them. However this should not be described as CLOW.
- Children with disability are to be welcomed to participate in CLOW. This may require prior contact with parents to ensure that the child knows that he or she is welcome and to identify any particular support required. A broader adaptation may be required, as outlined in the DMC.
- During their years of participation in CLOW, the children should progressively take on ministerial roles in the celebration. These include the readings, playing music, leading the singing or prayers.
- The liturgy is celebrated in a space that is separate but not too distant from the church. This place needs to be well prepared so that the environment is suitable for the worship of God. It should be arranged so that the children can see each other and see and hear the leader.
- The various liturgical objects used – lectionary, lectern, candle – should provide a focal point for the celebration and be treated with respect and reverence.
- When CLOW is held, the children participate in the Introductory Rites, the Liturgy of the Eucharist and the Concluding Rites with the worshipping assembly. Only the Liturgy of the Word is celebrated separately.
- The use of other ritual elements, such as processions, singing, dialogue and silence is integral to the children's experience of liturgy.
- Visual elements used in liturgy such as liturgical colours, light, water, cross, artwork etc. should be given greater prominence with children.
- The approved book of readings is the *Lectionary for Masses with Children*. Of the readings provided, all three, or two or even one reading may be used. The Gospel reading should always be included. In choosing the number of readings, leaders need to take into account the level of understanding of the children and limited time available for the celebration. A simple introduction before the word is proclaimed may help the children to focus on the readings.
- While the use of dramatic elements is sometimes appropriate, the impression

should not be given that the Liturgy of the Word is a play or historical re-enactment.

- The shortened responsorial psalm provided in the LMC is sung after the first reading. IF possible, the Gospel Acclamation with verse is sung before the Gospel reading.
- A reflection on the word to explain the reading(s), appropriate to the children's level of understanding, should be given by an adult approved by the parish priest. It may be instructional or make use of question and answer, discussion, guided reflection or silent meditation. If the Gospel reading of the day is a difficult one, the leader may choose to concentrate on one of the other readings in the reflection. It is important that the leaders have some understanding of the readings and can provide children with background information where necessary or appropriate.
- After the reflection, a variety of methods such as songs, mime and role-playing can be employed to further break open the scriptures and apply them to the children's lives. Some ways of engaging children's participation that respects their need for physical involvement include simple role-plays, liquid pictures, echo mimes, gospel reflections, frozen tableaux.
- The Prayer of the Faithful (General Intercessions) should always be included in the celebration
- If appropriate to the occasion, a simple statement of faith may be said. The Apostles' Creed or a question and answer form of the renewal of baptismal promises is recommended.
- As with any Liturgy of the Word, silence should be observed at appropriate times as part of the celebration. In their own way, children are genuinely capable of reflection. The children will need some guidance in learning how to recollect themselves, mediate briefly, or pray to god in their hearts.
- A simple procession leads the children back to rejoin the community for preparation of the Gifts. Children rejoin their families.





ADVENT

Readings

First Sunday of Advent

Violet

Jesus came to earth the first time as a baby - we remember this and celebrate it at Christmas. We know that one day he will return, but we don't know when. During Advent we think about the second coming of Jesus – we must be ready. Jesus tells us what sort of lives we must lead in preparation for this time. The Advent wreath helps us to focus on these things – its circle of greenery represents God's unending love, and the candles represent Jesus, the Light of the World. There are three violet and one pink one. The four candles are lit consecutively on the four Sundays of Advent. Today we light the first violet one.



Gospel

Matthew 24:37-44

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus said to his disciples:

“When the Son of Man appears things will be just as they were when Noah lived. People were eating, drinking, and getting married right up to the day that the flood came and Noah went into the big boat. They didn't know anything was happening until the flood came and swept them all away. That is how it will be when the Son of Man appears.

“Two men will be in the same field, but only one will be taken. The other will be left.

Two women will be together grinding grain, but only one will be taken. The other will be left.

“So be on your guard! You don't know when your Lord will come. Homeowners never know when a thief is coming, and they are always on guard to keep one from breaking in. Always be ready! You don't know when the Son of Man will come.”

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Isaiah 2:1-5

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

This is the vision that Isaiah son of Amoz had about Judah and Jerusalem:

In the future the mountain with the Lord's temple will be the highest of all. It will reach above the hills, and every nation will rush to it. Many people will come and say, “Let's go to the mountain of the Lord God of Jacob and worship in his temple.”

The Lord will teach us his Law from Jerusalem. He will settle the arguments of nations and of people. They will pound their swords and their spears into garden tools. And they will never make war or attach other nations.

People of Israel, let's live by the light of the Lord.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 122

Response: **Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

It made me glad to hear them say, “Let's go to the house of the Lord!”
Jerusalem, we are standing inside your gates.

Because of my friends and my relatives, I will pray for peace.

And because of the house of the Lord our God, I will work for your good.

Second Reading

Romans 13:11-13a

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and sisters:

You know what sort of times we live in and so you should live properly.
It is time to wake up.

You know that the day when we will be saved is nearer now than when we first put our faith in the Lord. Night is almost over, and day will soon appear. We must stop behaving as people do in the dark and be ready to live in the light. So behave properly, as people do in the day.

The word of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Violet cloth, Lectionary, a candle and an Advent Wreath with three purple candles and one pink candle

Images from the Readings

- Be on your guard!
- Always be ready!
- pound swords and spears into garden tools
- it is time to wake up
- live in the light

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Introduce the children to the Season of Advent, the four weeks before Christmas, which is the beginning of the church year. Point out the violet cloth and the Advent Wreath. Explain that the wreath is one way of celebrating this special time of preparation. Its circle of evergreen branches represents God's love which is without beginning or end; one candle is lit each week until Christmas. Some of the end-time images might be frightening for the children, but ensure that they are contained within the context of Jesus' coming and God's love for us.

How does your family prepare for Christmas? The church helps us to prepare by reminding us what will happen at the end of time.

What are the things that we can do to make our hearts ready inside for the new birth of Jesus this Christmas?

Just as we need to do special things to get ready for Christmas, we also need to be ready for the time when Jesus comes again, to welcome him into our hearts and lives today and every day. How can we do this?

What is Jesus asking us to do when he tells us to be on our guard and always be ready?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to join hands around the focus and pray a blessing on the wreath: "Lord God, let your bless us as we light the candles of this wreath. May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation. May he come quickly and not delay. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen" Children respond, "Come, Lord Jesus, Come" - Light the first purple candle.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Advent is a four week season of Liturgical time during which we look back to the coming of Christ in history, and forward to his coming in glory. The first readings at the beginning of this liturgical year focus on the prophet Isaiah. His vision and images evolve with joy as he sees what is to come and what this means for the world. His joy is infectious as he calls us to live by the light. Paul writes to the early church with huge urgency to prepare, and this is echoed in the words of the gospel. Preparations need to be linked back to history, always looking back and then ahead with alertness. In contrast to the titles given to him by the disciples, Jesus refers to himself as the 'Son of Man'. This simply means a human being, but also links to the Scriptural references to the one who will be judge and saviour of all.

Reflection for Leaders

In the early church believers expected the second coming of Christ at any moment. Customs and traditions that have developed around this season of waiting often reflect the marking of time, such as with Advent wreaths and Advent calendars. Have there been any times in your life when you have been sleepless with excited expectation, or nights that have dragged interminably with anxiety or sadness? How can we link the call to be alert in the readings this week to what is happening around us? Reflect this week on the needs of others, and how we can respond to these; your own self – where you are in life and what things need to change; where God is in the ordinariness of your daily life. Make time each day to watch and listen. Engage in times of silent prayer.

Liturgy Outline

First Sunday of Advent

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you sent your Son, Jesus, to be our Saviour.
Help us to prepare for Christmas. Amen

FIRST READING Isaiah 2:1-5
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 122
 Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Romans 13:11-13a
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 24:37-44
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: We have listened to God's Word. Now let us come to God full of hope for all our needs:

- For a real sense of excited anticipation of the coming of Jesus
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For peace in our homes, our schools and our communities as we approach the Christmas season
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For peace and harmony in war-torn countries around the world, that weapons be remade into garden tools
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we always learn to be alert and aware of God's presence in our daily lives
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of light, we bring these prayers to you through Jesus Christ our Lord
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Second Sunday of Advent

Violet



John the Baptist was God's messenger to help the people prepare before the public ministry of Jesus began. What was his message? John lived in the desert, wore strange clothes and ate even stranger food. Why did John live such an unusual lifestyle? Who were drawn to John, and for what did they come to see him? As Christmas draws closer, how are we to prepare? Today we light the second violet candle on our Advent wreath.

Gospel

Matthew 3:1-9,11

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

John the Baptist started preaching in the desert of Judea. He said, "Turn back to God! The kingdom of heaven will soon be here."

John was the one the prophet Isaiah was talking about when he said, "In the desert someone is shouting, 'Get the road ready for the Lord! Make a straight path for him.'"

John wore clothes made of camel's hair. He had a leather strap around his waist and ate grasshoppers and wild honey.

From Jerusalem and all Judea and from the Jordan River Valley crowds of people went to John. They told how sorry they were for their sins, and he baptised them in the river.

Many Pharisees and Sadducees also came to be baptised. But John said to them: "you bunch of snakes! Who warned you to run from the coming judgment? Do something to show that you have really given up your sins. And don't start telling yourselves that you belong to Abraham's family. I tell you that God can turn these stones into children for Abraham.

"I baptise you with water so that you will give up your sins. But someone more powerful is going to come, and I am not good enough even to carry his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Isaiah 11:1-4a, 5-6, 9b

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

The Lord says this:

Like a branch that sprouts from a stump, someone from David's family will someday be king. The Spirit of the Lord will take control of him and give him understanding and wisdom and insight. He will be powerful, and he will know and honour the Lord. His greatest joy will be to worship the Lord.

He won't judge by appearances or listen to rumours. The poor and the helpless will be treated with fairness and with justice. Honesty and fairness will be his royal robes.

Leopards and young goats, and wolves and lambs will lie down and rest in the same field. Calves and lions will eat together and be cared for by a child. Just as water fills the sea, the land will be filled with people who know and honour the Lord.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 72

Response: **Justice shall flourish in his time,
and fullness of peace for ever.**

Please help the king to be honest and fair just like you, our God.

Let his kingdom reach from sea to sea, from the Euphrates River across all the earth.

May the glory of the king shine brightly forever like the sun in the sky.

Let him make nations prosper and learn to praise him.

Second Reading

Romans 15:4-6

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and sisters:

The Scriptures were written to teach and encourage us by giving us hope. God is the one who makes us patient and cheerful. I pray that he will help you live at peace with each other, as you follow Christ.

Then all of you together will praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The word of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Violet cloth, Lectionary, a candle and an Advent Wreath with three purple candles and one pink candle. Symbols of John the Baptist such as an icon, Hessian cloth wrapped in a leather belt, a stick, honey. A map of the Holy Land and a picture of the wilderness where John lived could be helpful.

Images from the Readings

- Turn back to God!
- Do something to show you have given up your sins
- Someone more powerful is going to come
- Honesty and fairness will be his royal robes
- Patient and cheerful

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Before Jesus came, God sent a special person to prepare the way for him. Do you know who he was? (John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin).

John lived in the desert or the wilderness (show the map of the Holy Land and some pictures of the Jordan and the wilderness).

He wore strange clothing made of camel hair, and ate strange food. Some people felt uncomfortable when he spoke because his message called people to change their lives, and that isn't always easy. What do we call people who give us challenging or difficult messages from God? (prophets) What was the message that John brought? (turn back to God, prepare for the one who is to come)

Who was John preparing the people for? (Jesus)

How did the people show that they were sorry for their sins (they were baptised in the River Jordan)

Act of Worship

Light the first two purple candles and sing "Prepare the Way" (GA 284) or similar.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Isaiah describes the coming Messiah, recognisable by Christians as Jesus Christ: from the house of David, full of God's Spirit and able to fulfil the role of Just Judge. Isaiah sees a future world full of peace and the knowledge of God. Into today's gospel strides John the Baptist, calling people to change their lives. John was among many faithful Jews who rejected the compromise of religious life in the cities of Palestine, and withdrew into the desert to pray and preach. Desert places are traditionally where people find God, away from the busyness of daily life and concerns. There he draws a growing following from the people, who come to be baptised by him in the Jordan River. John reserves his harshest words for the Pharisees and Sadducees, in whom he recognises unwillingness to change and a religiosity and self-righteousness that marginalises others. He challenges them to show evidence of repentance. John is often referred to as the last of the prophets and is the link between the Hebrew and the Christian scriptures. His call to repentance and announcing of a new day echoes the line of previous prophetic voices throughout Israel's history who spoke in God's name. His is the last voice to be heard before the Word – Jesus himself – speaks.

Reflection for Leaders

A call to change is always disturbing. John's blunt speaking calls us to honestly examine our lives and our situations. Had you been present to hear John preaching and challenging, what situations, attitudes and motives would he have caused you to examine? What aspects of your life might be in need of change? Yet crowds of people sought him out, opening themselves to his message. What messages do you allow into your life? What are the things that prevent you from hearing some messages? Would you have welcomed John and sought him out? If John asked you to show evidence of your repentance, what would your response be? Advent is a time in which we are invited to withdraw and make time for prayer and reflection. During this week try to attend a Reconciliation service, and put time aside to prayerfully prepare for Christmas.

Liturgy Outline

Second Sunday of Advent

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you sent John the Baptist to help people prepare for the coming of your Son, Jesus. Help us to prepare too, so that we may be ready to receive him with joy. Amen

FIRST READING Isaiah 11:1-4a, 5-6, 9b

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 72

Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace forever
(Or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Romans 15:4-6

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 3:1-9, 11

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: God knows our needs and listens to our prayers, so let us bring them in confidence:

- That the church be a place of justice and mercy, peace and harmony
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to live by hope and encourage each other
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That people everywhere learn to live with integrity and fairness
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For an attitude of openness to listen to prophet people who sometimes challenge us or make us feel uncomfortable
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of challenge, remove from us the things that stop us from welcoming Jesus with joy. We pray this through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Third Sunday of Advent

Violet

This is the third Sunday of Advent, known as Gaudete Sunday, or Joy Sunday. For this reason we light the pink candle on our Advent wreath, which symbolises joy. Now that Christmas is getting closer the light is getting brighter with three candles lit. John the Baptist was getting excited to hear of the marvellous things that Jesus was doing. Why did he send his followers to Jesus? What did his followers see and hear? How would they have felt as they witnessed all these miracles happening?



Gospel

Matthew 11:12-11

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

John was in prison when he heard what Christ was doing. So John sent some of his followers to ask Jesus, "Are you the one we should be looking for? Or must we wait for someone else?"

Jesus answered: "Go and tell John what you have heard and seen. The blind are now able to see, and the lame can walk. People with leprosy are being healed, and the deaf can hear. The dead are raised to life, and the poor are hearing the good news. God will bless everyone who does not reject me because of what I do."

As John's followers were going away, Jesus spoke to the crowds about John: "What sort of person did you go out into the desert to see? Was he like tall grass blown about by the wind?"

"What kind of man did you go out to see? Was he someone dressed in fine clothes? People who dress like that live in the king's palace.

"What did you really go out to see? Was he a prophet? He certainly was. I tell you that he was more than a prophet.

In the Scriptures God says about him,

'I am sending my messenger ahead of you to get things ready for you.'

"I tell you that no one ever born on this earth is greater than John the Baptist. But whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Isaiah 35:1-2, 5-6ab, 10

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

Thirsty deserts will be glad, and barren fields will rejoice and blossom like flowers. They will bloom everywhere and sing joyful songs. They will be as majestic as Mount Lebanon and as glorious as Mount Carmel or the plain of Sharon. Everyone will see the glory and the majesty of the Lord our God.

The blind will see, and the deaf will hear. The disabled will leap about like deer, and tongues once silent will shout.

The people the Lord has rescued will come back singing, as they enter Zion. Happiness will be a crown they will always wear. They will rejoice and be glad, because all sorrows and worries will be gone.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 146

Response: **Lord, come and save us.**

God always keeps his word.

He gives justice to the poor and food to the hungry.

The Lord sets prisoners free and heals blind eyes.

He gives a helping hand to everyone who falls.

The Lord God of Zion will rule forever! Shout praises to the Lord!

Second Reading

James 5:7-10

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF JAMES

My friends, be patient until the Lord returns. Think of farmers who wait patiently for the spring and summer rains to make their valuable crops grow. Be patient like those farmers and don't give up. The Lord will soon be here! Don't grumble about each other or you will be judged, and the judge is right outside the door.

My friends, follow the example of the prophets who spoke for the Lord. They were patient, even when they had to suffer.

The word of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Violet cloth, Lectionary, a candle and an Advent Wreath with three purple candles and one pink candle. Symbols of John the Baptist (as used last week) such as an icon, Hessian cloth wrapped in a leather belt, a stick, and honey.

Images from the Readings

- Are you the one?
- Tell what you have seen and heard
- I am sending my messenger ahead of you
- Blooming of deserts
- Wait patiently

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. What things tell you that Christmas is nearly here? (Decorations, making cakes, buying gifts, music in shops etc)

How do you know when Christmas is really here?

Do you remember the person we talked about last week? (John the Baptist) John wasn't sure if Jesus was the special person God was sending to Israel.

What did he do to find out? (he sent his followers to talk to Jesus)

What was Jesus' response to their question? (He asked them to look at what was happening and compare this to Scripture)

What were the things that were happening when Jesus met with people? (Blind people could see, lame people could walk etc)

How would people have felt when they saw all these wonderful things happening? (amazed, full of excitement and joy as they began to realise who Jesus was)

What things tell us that Jesus really is the one God promised?

Act of Worship

Light two purple candles and the pink candle today, explaining Joy Sunday, and sing "Prepare the Way" (GA 284) or similar.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Isaiah in the first reading, has a vision of the world bursting into bloom at the Messiah's coming, and every suffering turned to joy. His words encouraged Israel during a time of crisis. Throughout Israel's history the people had looked forward to the coming of the Messiah – God's anointed one - who would rescue Israel from oppression and injustice. The coming of the Messiah, predicted in Hebrew Scriptures throughout the generations, was to be indicated by the very miracles that Jesus told John's disciples to tell John. Jesus is indicating that these signs gave proof that the Messiah had indeed come. Like many of the day, John may well have been confused by his expectation of the Messiah being a judge full of power to effect reform in the land. Instead, Jesus brought his message of forgiveness, healing and reconciliation. Among the great prophets of Israel's history stood Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah. Jesus acclaims John as being above all of these. Matthew's gospel was believed to be written c 80-90AD by a Jewish-Christian writer. It is well organised around five great teachings and is primarily concerned with revealing Jesus as the Messiah of Israel and announcing God's Kingdom.

Reflection for Leaders

There is a common misapprehension that prophets were people who predicted the future, but in reality their role was to speak in the name of God and call others to a way of life that reflected faith and courage. They were often passionate people and could be uncomfortable companions! Can you think of any prophets of our day who continue to challenge people and touch lives?

Like John, you may have had preconceived expectations of Jesus. Has your experience matched these expectations? Where do you expect to meet him? Is Jesus 'the One' as far as you are concerned, or are you looking elsewhere? What are the things that hinder you from welcoming Jesus with joy and hope this week? Where do you see the church being a presence of Jesus in the world today, and being 'good news' to people who are in need? During the week find a way of bringing 'good news' to someone.

Liturgy Outline

Third Sunday of Advent

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, we look forward to Christmas with excitement and hope and joy. Help us to share the good news with others. Amen

FIRST READING Isaiah 35:1-2, 5-6ab, 10
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 146
 Lord , come and save us
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* James 5:7-10
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 11:2-11
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: God knows our needs and listens to our prayers, so let us bring them in confidence:

- That the church be a place of justice and mercy, peace and harmony
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to live by hope and encourage each other
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That people everywhere learn to live with integrity and fairness
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For an attitude of openness to listen to prophet people who sometimes challenge us or make us feel uncomfortable
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of challenge, remove from us the things that stop us from welcoming Jesus with joy. We pray this through Jesus Christ our Lord
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Violet



God sends a special messenger to Joseph in his dream, just as when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to tell her she would have a child. What did Joseph need to be told by this messenger? What was his response? We, too, are called to trust God and to do what is asked of us, just as Mary and Joseph did.

Today is the last Sunday in Advent and so we light the last violet candle on our Advent wreath.

Gospel

Matthew 1:18-24

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

This is how Jesus Christ was born. A young woman named Mary was engaged to Joseph from King David's family. But before they were married, she learned that she was going to have a baby by God's Holy Spirit.

Joseph was a good man and did not want to embarrass Mary in front of everyone. So he decided to quietly call off the wedding.

While Joseph was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, the baby that Mary will have is from the Holy Spirit.

Go ahead and marry her. Then after the baby is born, name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

So God's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "A virgin will have a baby boy, and he will be called Immanuel," which means "God is with us."

After Joseph woke up, he and Mary were soon married, just as the Lord's angel had told him to do.

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF ST PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and sisters:

Long ago God promised the good news by what his prophets said in the holy Scriptures. This good news is about his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ! As a human, he was from the family of David. But the Holy Spirit proved that Jesus is the powerful Son of God, because he was raised from death.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 24

Response: **Let the Lord enter, he is king of glory.**

The earth and everything on it belong to the Lord.

The world and its people belong to him.

The Lord placed it all on the oceans and rivers.

Who may climb the Lord's hill or stand in his holy temple?

Only those who do right for the right reasons,

and don't worship idols.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Violet cloth, Lectionary, a candle and the Advent wreath.

Images from the Readings

- An angel came in a dream
- 'God is with us'
- Joseph's trust and faith
- Joseph's immediate obedience
- The good news promised long ago

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Who do you think is the main character of the gospel this week?

What was Joseph's reaction when he found out that his fiancée Mary was going to have a baby? (Confused, wanted to call off the wedding but didn't want to embarrass Mary)

What changed his mind about what to do? (The angel in his dream with the message from God)

What did Joseph do then? (Married Mary, as the angel told him)

What does this say about the sort of person Joseph was? (Obedient, caring, trusted God)

What can we learn from this? How can we be like Joseph?

Can you remember the names that God's son was to be called? (Jesus and Emmanuel) These names mean 'God saves' & 'God is with us'. These names were a message from God that things would never be the same again because now 'God is with us'

Act of Worship

Today all the candles on the Advent wreath are lit. Sing the first verse of 'O Come, O Come Emmanuel' (AOV1: 174; GA 285)

O Come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

In today's gospel, Joseph is faced with an agonising situation. He works out a way to resolve things, but in a dream God presents reassurance. Joseph's response is implicit and unhesitating trust in God despite the confusion and anguish. Many of the accounts that Matthew describes are from Joseph's perspective, whereas Luke tells the story through the eyes of Mary. All the difficulties and struggles that surround Jesus from the first show God's very tender protection of him from the outset, and these are the situations that Matthew describes and focuses on. Joseph is alerted and receives revelation of God's will in a dream. In biblical times dreams were a common way in which God communicated with human beings, and many famous people in the Hebrew Scriptures, such as Abraham, Jacob and Joseph for example, received instructions in this way. Today we understand that not all dreams are direct communications from God, but they can often alert us to the ways God speaks through other means – intuition, Scripture, church teaching, words of other people, our own imagination and thoughts for instance. Joseph's immediate response was to trust God, and this example of obedience and faith shown by both Mary and Joseph are still models for us today in our own confusing times.

Reflection for Leaders

Christmas is drawing very near, and it is time to consider how much or how little we are able to trust God when we have difficult situations to deal with. It can be very testing to let go in a confusing situation and trust God. Have there been times when you have done this, or have you felt that you needed to resolve things by yourself? What does this tell you? Make a decision to hand over some of your anxieties to God, rather than trying to fix things yourself. Are there times when you know that God is communicating with you about some decisions you have to make? How do you keep open to these? Have there been times, like Joseph, when you have acted as the result of a dream or an intuition? Advent is almost over and there is still time to be generous to others in need or who are lonely at this time of the year. Be alert to bless others during the week.

Liturgy Outline

Fourth Sunday of Advent

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you sent an angel to reveal the coming of your son. Give us hope and help us to be ready to hear when he will come again.
Amen

FIRST READING Romans 1:2-4
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 24
 Let the Lord enter, he is king of glory
(Or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included this week)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 1:18-24
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: We are God's children, so let us bring all our needs to God with hope and confidence:

- That the church will be a place where God's presence 'with us' can be powerfully experienced
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That our trust in God will be strengthened through times of confusion and difficult situations
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For an attitude of generosity and care towards those who are sick, lonely and poor
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For an openness to receive messages from God in unexpected ways
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God with us, help us to know your presence in our daily lives and look kindly on those for whom we pray. We pray this through Jesus Christ our Lord
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

The Birth of the Lord

No material has been given for Christmas as it is recommended that Children celebrate with the full community





CHRISTMASTIME

Readings

The Holy Family

White

Joseph had to save his family from terrible danger. Do you know what that danger was? Families are special in lots of ways. They can be a very important way of keeping us safe and protecting us from harm; they share the things that they have, and help us to grow and develop into strong people with good values. When we are baptised, we belong not just to our own little family, but we also belong to the bigger family of God



Gospel

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

An angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. The angel said, "Get up! Hurry and take the child and his mother to Egypt! Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is looking for the child and wants to kill him."

That night Joseph got up and took his wife and the child to Egypt, where they stayed until Herod died. So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "I called my son out of Egypt."

After King Herod died, an angel from the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph while he was still in Egypt. The angel said, "Get up and take the child and his mother back to Israel. The people who wanted to kill him are now dead."

Joseph got up and left with them for Israel. But when he heard that Herod's son Archelaus was now ruler of Judea, he was afraid to go there. Then in a dream he was told to go to Galilee, and they went to live there in the town of Nazareth.

So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "He will be called a Nazarene."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Sirach 3:2-6

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF SIRACH

Children, the Lord expects you to honour your father and has given your mother authority over you.

If you honour your father, your sins will be forgiven.

If you praise your mother, treasure will be stored up in heaven for you.

If you honour your father, your own children will make you happy, and all of your prayers will be answered.

If you respect your father, you will live a long life, and if you listen to the Lord, your mother can relax.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 128

Response: **Happy are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.**

The Lord will bless you if you respect him and obey his laws.

Your fields will produce, and you will be happy and all will go well.

Your wife will be as fruitful as a grapevine, and just as an olive tree is rich with olives, your home will be rich with healthy children.

That is how the Lord will bless everyone who respects him. I pray that the Lord will bless you from Zion and let Jerusalem prosper as long as you live.

Second Reading

Colossians 3:12-17

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

Brothers and sisters: God loves you and has chosen you as his own special people. So be gentle, kind, humble, meek, and patient. Put up with each other, and forgive anyone who does you wrong, just as Christ has forgiven you. Love is more important than anything else. It is what ties everything completely together.

Each one of you is part of the body of Christ, and you were chosen to live together in peace. So let the peace that comes from Christ control your thoughts. And be grateful.

Let the message about Christ completely fill your lives, while you use all your wisdom to teach and instruct each other. With thankful hearts, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. Whatever you say or do should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks to God the Father because of him.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a map and a sipper bottle

Images from the Readings

- Respect and honour your parents
- God loves you and has chosen you
- Love is more important than anything else
- Jesus is saved by Joseph's obedience
- God's promise came true

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Have you ever been on a long journey? What are some of the things that help as you travel?

Why did the angel tell Joseph to take the child and his mother to Egypt? What was the hurry?

Do you think Joseph might have been afraid? Why?

Did Joseph have time to pack the things that would have helped on the journey?

Why did Jesus need a loving and caring family to look after him and protect him as he grew up?

Can you think of a time when your family had to protect you from danger? What else are families for?

Do the people in your family have special 'jobs' or 'roles'?

When we were baptised we became a member of the family of God. Can you see any ways it is similar being in the special family of God with your own family situation?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to name the members of their family. Thank God for each one of them and ask God to bless them and keep them safe.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

This gospel shows how families must rely on the love and providence of God and the practical mutual support of each other. Matthew is not so much reflecting on the family in the gospel today, as showing us that Jesus was the One long awaited by Israel, who would fulfil all the prophecies and lead the people to freedom and holiness. Even at the beginning of this story, Matthew describes Jesus, like Moses, as being 'called out of Egypt'. However, all the readings today point to the support of loving relationships and protective families. Our baptism brings us into God's family, where we learn the advantages and the responsibilities of belonging.

Reflection for Leaders

The feast of the Holy Family, coming within the Christmastide celebrations, gives us a further opportunity to reflect on the miracle of the incarnation of Jesus into a human family. God provided this special family to protect and nurture his Son in his earthly This family, who were so faithful and instantly obedient to God's will, provides us with a model that show us how to be committed and caring for the responsibilities with which we have been blessed. Have you ever wondered about the instant obedience that Joseph displayed when he was warned that Jesus was in danger in a dream? How instant is our obedience when we recognise that God is asking us to do something that will be disruptive to our life?

Reflect on your own experience of family life. What is it that makes some relationships more special than others? Can you identify ways in which you have come to experience God's love in your family? Do you allow other members of your family to experience God's love through you?

As member of our own families we have certain responsibilities. We also have responsibilities as members of God's family. What are these responsibilities and how do we prioritise them? Are there times when there is conflict between these? How do you resolve this?

What ways does your faith community support families and help them to thrive? What opportunities are there for families to grow in faith together?

Liturgy Outline The Holy Family

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

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PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, we are your children. Thank you for the gift of life. Help us to live fully; using the gifts we have each been given, learning to use these to help each other. Amen

FIRST READING Sirach 3:2-6
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 128
 Happy are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways (or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Colossians 3:12 - 17
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Just as Jesus taught us, we turn to God for all our needs:

- For the church, that it be a place where people can shelter in safety Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we teach others by our example to love one another Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we treat others with respect, dignity and kindness Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That families everywhere will be strong and supportive of each other Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Loving God, help us to live in peace with all your people, that we may share in your life forever. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

The Epiphany of the Lord

White



Who were the wise men and where did they come from? What gifts did they bring to Jesus? Gold is a precious and costly metal, often worn by kings. Gold was to indicate the royalty of the child. Frankincense is a type of incense which gives off a perfumed, pleasant smelling smoke, to indicate the holiness of the child. Myrrh is a perfumed ointment often used to prepare the dead for burial. This was to indicate the humanity of the Christ child, and symbolise his suffering and death. Why did the angel warn them not to go back to King Herod?

Gospel

Matthew 2:1-12

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king. During this time some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and said, "Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard about this, he was worried, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. Herod brought together all the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?"

They told him, "He will be born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet wrote, 'Bethlehem in the land of Judea, you are very important among the towns of Judea. From your town will come a leader, who will be like a shepherd for my people Israel.' Herod secretly called in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star. He told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, let me know. I want to go and worship him too."

The wise men listened to what the king said and then left. And the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They were thrilled and excited to see the star.

When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshipped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh and gave them to him. Later they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they went back home by another road.

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Isaiah 60:1-6

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

Jerusalem, stand up and shine! Your new day is dawning, and the glory of the Lord shines brightly on you. The earth and its people are covered with darkness, but the glory of the Lord is shining over you. Nations and kings will come to the light of your dawning day.

Open your eyes and look around! Crowds are on their way. Your sons are coming from distant lands, and your daughters are being carried like young children. When you see this, your faces will glow. Your hearts will beat fast and swell with pride.

Treasures from over the sea and the wealth of nations will be brought to you. Your country will be covered with caravans of young camels, from Midian and Ephah. And the people of Sheba will bring gold and spices in praise of the Lord.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 72

Response: **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

Please help the king to be honest and fair just like you, our God.

Let him be honest and fair with all your people, especially the poor.

Force the rulers of Tarshish and of the islands to pay taxes to him.

Make the kings of Sheba and of Seba bring gifts. Make other rulers bow down and all nations serve him.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle, and a nativity crib. Also have a map of Israel, a star and three wrapped presents to use.

Images from the Readings

- The glory of God shines brightly on you.
- Crowds are on their way
- We saw his star
- A shepherd for my people
- They took out their gifts

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. The wise men from the east came on a long journey to find the child that was born to be king of the Jews. How did they know where to go? Why did they go and talk to Herod?

Where did Herod tell them to go? (Show the map and indicate where Bethlehem and Jerusalem are on it)

What things did the wise men bring for the child? (Gold, precious and costly, was offered to kings; frankincense, perfumed incense, was offered to God; and myrrh, a perfumed ointment used for burials, indicated the humanity of Jesus and his death)

When do we give or receive presents?

Why did the angel tell the wise men not to return to Herod?

Act of Worship

Dramatisation of the gospel by the children might be used as an act of worship this week. Use the star and let them mime following it towards the nativity crib. Let three children bring the presents.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The word 'epiphany' comes from a Greek word meaning revelation of manifestation. The birth of Christ is the sign that God is with us, that God's hand is everywhere at work in the world. The 'wise men' were probably astrologers, or magi, from Persia, and they represent all who seek God with a sincere heart. They were not Jews, yet they were the ones who recognised the signs that indicated something special was happening, and they travelled far to find and worship the new king. Naturally they headed towards the palace in Jerusalem in their search. Imagine their confusion when they were led to a simple house in a small town. However they were open to seeing the divine in the ordinary, and after encountering Jesus they returned home by a new road. Herod, on the other hand, and the very people who should have been aware of what was happening right under their noses, had the opposite response: when they understand what was happening, they were not open to the revelation of God in this child and sought to harm him.

Reflection for Leaders

This ancient feast celebrates the welcoming of all people who seek God with a sincere heart. It is not just the chosen people who are invited to faith in Jesus as Lord. He is significant to all who seek truth, and his light draws people into relationship with God. He is the sign of God's love for creation and through whom God's love is made known to all.

Today is a time to reflect on how far we have travelled in our own journey towards Jesus. What is leading you? How much progress have you made? What gifts do you bring? How open are you to the possibility of finding the divine in the ordinary? As we think on the story of the wise men, and reflect on how thrilled and excited they were to see the star, we might reflect back on times of pure delight in our own life experience. Did they cause us to take a new road?

We might also think about how open we are to welcoming foreigners' who come to seek Jesus. What hospitality ministries are present in your faith community? How important are they?

Liturgy Outline

Epiphany of the Lord

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

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PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you revealed your Son to the world by the guidance of a star. Lead us too, by the light of faith, that we may bring others to you as well. Amen

FIRST READING

Isaiah 60:1-6
Reader: The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 72
 Lord , every nation on earth will adore you (or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included this week)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL

Matthew 2:1-12

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Believing the promises of the Word we have just heard, let us call upon God for all our needs:

- For the Church, that she be a welcoming beacon of light and truth and hope to guide us all to know God
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we share the gifts that we have to help and support each other
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we have the courage to go where God leads us
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That people who do not know the gift of Jesus to the world will know true peace in their hearts
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Loving God, help us to share your love and all that you have given us, to make this world a place of welcome. We pray this through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

The Baptism of the Lord

White

Jesus was baptised in order to receive the Holy Spirit for his work of teaching and healing, so that everyone would know he was the Son of God. Have you attended any baptisms? What are the special symbols used in the ceremony? – Promises, water, holy oil, white garment, lighted candle. What does our baptism mean to us?



Gospel

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

Everyone became excited and wondered, "Could John be the Messiah?" John said, "I am just baptising with water. But someone more powerful is going to come, and I am not good enough even to untie his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

After everyone else had been baptised, Jesus himself was baptised. Then as he prayed, the sky opened up, and the Holy Spirit came down upon him in the form of a dove. A voice from heaven said, "You are my own dear Son, and I am pleased with you."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Isaiah 42:1-2, 4, 6-7

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

Here is my servant! I have made him strong. He is my chosen one, and I am pleased with him.

I will give him my Spirit, and he will bring justice to the nations. He won't shout or yell or call out in the streets. He won't quit or give up until he brings justice to all the earth, and people in foreign lands long for his teaching.

I, the Lord, chose you because of my kindness, and I am here at your side. I created and appointed you to bring light and my promise of hope to the nations, and set prisoners free from dark dungeons.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 29

Response: **The Lord will bless his people with peace.**

The voice of the Lord echoes over the oceans. He thunders above the roar of the raging seas, and his voice is mighty and marvellous.

The glorious Lord God thunders above the roar of the raging seas, and the temple is filled with shouts of praise. The Lord rules on his throne, king of the flood forever.

Second Reading

Acts 10:34-38

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Peter said to Cornelius and his household: "Now I am certain that God treats all people alike. God is pleased with everyone who worships him and does right, no matter what nation they come from. This is the same message that God gave to the people of Israel, when he sent Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, to offer peace to them.

"You surely know what happened everywhere in Judea. It all began in Galilee after John had told everyone to be baptised. God gave the Holy Spirit and power to Jesus from Nazareth. He was with Jesus, as he went around doing good and healing everyone who was under the power of the devil."

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a bowl of water, a white garment and a small bottle of oil

Images from the Readings

- Here is my servant
- Chosen and appointed
- The gift of the Holy Spirit and power
- Baptising with water
- I am pleased with you

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Have you ever been to a baptism? Can you remember what happened? What were the special symbols used? (white garment, holy oil, water, lighted candle, promises made)

When we are baptised we receive the Holy Spirit and power, just as Jesus did. Then we become 'beloved' sons and daughters of God, just as Jesus was.

When Jesus was baptised, this was the beginning of his work among the people. What was his work? (Serve others and tell them of God's love)

Our baptism means that that it works. In what ways can we do this? How can we be like Jesus at home, school, with our friends?

Act of Worship

Invite children to come forward and use the water in the bowl to sign their foreheads. They could use their name and repeat the words that God spoke over Jesus when he was baptised: "N____, you are my own dear child, I am pleased with you."

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The reading from Isaiah is the first of what are called the Servant Songs. We now see the servant as being Jesus, the Messiah, a leader who will bring justice, peace and healing. Before Jesus came, the Jews felt that God's Spirit was no longer alive in the world. God's communication with the people had ceased since the time of the Prophets. But the baptism of the Lord in the Jordan once again signals a renewal of the relationship between God and all the people, including Gentiles. By Jewish law, Jesus was probably about thirty years old, the legal age for public teaching. He was baptised as a sign of his obedience and compliance with the will of God. In Jewish literature, a voice from heaven is the sign of a religious teacher, a prophet. The readings are full of symbolism about the renewed relationship God is instituting to end our separation. The word baptism comes from a Greek word meaning 'to plunge'. The first Christians were baptised by being plunged into running streams or rivers, following the practice of John. Later, large fonts were built in churches and baptism of the faithful (usually adults) was by full immersion.

Reflection for Leaders

The feast of the Baptism of the Lord, ends the season of Christmas. Baptism is the first of the seven sacraments of the Church. Immersion in water symbolises not only death and purification, but also regeneration and renewal. The white garment represents the new life in Christ; the oil symbolises the anointing into the ministry of Jesus, King, priest and prophet. The lit candle represents the light of Christ in our lives.

The mainstream Christian churches recognise the same baptism, so a person baptised into one of these churches need not repeat the process if they change to another denomination. As we consider the privileges and responsibilities of our own baptism this week, let us reflect on our own sense of being set apart and chosen by God. What have been the consequences of our baptism, and how is our life different because of it? How strong is your sense of being 'beloved' and 'favoured' by God? How much time do you spend alone in prayer?

Liturgy Outline

Baptism of the Lord

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, we became your children at our baptism. Help us to know your love so we can share it freely with others. Amen

FIRST READING Isaiah 42: 1-2, 4, 6-7
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 29
 The Lord will bless his people with peace (or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Acts 10:34-38
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Luke 3:15-16, 21-22
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Let us bring all our needs to our loving God:

- For the Church, that it be a place where people are always welcome
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the poor, the sick and the lonely will know how much God loves and cares for them
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we treat people who are different from us with respect
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the gift of acceptance in our lives
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Loving God, help us to know the depth of your love for us that we may share this with all we meet. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.



ORDINARY TIME

Readings

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green



God sent a sign so that John would know who was the chosen one that the people were to follow. John had been preparing the people, but John's work was coming to an end. Do you know what this sign was? There was another occasion when the Holy Spirit appeared in a different form. Do you know when that was? John had a special name for the chosen one, the 'Lamb of God'. What does this name mean?

Gospel

John 1:29-34

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

John saw Jesus coming toward him and said: "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! He is the one I told you about when I said, 'Someone else will come. He is greater than I am, because he was alive before I was born.'

"I didn't know who he was. But I came to baptise you with water, so that everyone in Israel would see him.

"I was there and saw the Spirit come down on him like a dove from heaven. And the Spirit stayed on him. Before this I didn't know who he was. But the one who sent me to baptise with water had told me, 'You will see the Spirit come down and stay on someone. Then you will know that he is the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit.'

"I saw this happen, and I tell you that he is the Son of God."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

The Lord said to me, "Israel, you are my servant, and because of you I will be highly honoured."

Even before I was born, the Lord chose me to serve him and to bring back the people of Israel. The Lord God has honoured me and made me strong.

Now the Lord says to me, "It isn't enough for you to be merely my servant. You must do more than lead back those from the tribes of Israel who have survived. I have placed you here as a light for the Gentiles. You are to take my saving power everywhere on earth."

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 40

Response: **Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.**

I patiently waited, Lord, for you to hear my prayer.

You listened and you gave me a new song, a song of praise to you.

"I enjoy pleasing you. Your Law is in my heart."

You, Lord, never fail to have pity on me;

Your love and faithfulness always keep me secure.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a bowl of water with sprig of greenery

Images from the Readings

- Here is the Lamb of God
- He is greater than I am
- Baptise with the Holy Spirit
- You are a light for the Gentiles
- Take my saving power everywhere

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Who is it who is speaking of Jesus? (John the Baptist)

Did you notice what special names John gave to Jesus? ('Lamb of God' and 'Son of God')

Do you know why John called Jesus the 'Lamb of God'? (The Jews used a perfect lamb as a sacrifice for their sins. John's words show us that Jesus' death was to take the place of these sacrifices for our sins forever)

Do you remember a special time in the Mass when we say or sing about the Lamb of God? (just before Communion time)

John had been preparing the people for the one who was to come after him. How did he know that this was Jesus? (the Spirit came down on him like a dove when he was baptised)

What do you think John meant when he said '... he will baptise with the Holy Spirit.' ?

Act of Worship

Hold the bowl of water and bless it, saying: "Blessed are you, God of all creation. We take this water, symbol of our baptism, and give you thanks for it. You have given us a share in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ. You have created us in his image and made us temples of your Spirit." Using the sprig of greenery, sprinkle the children, who can then make the sign of the cross as they feel the drops of water. Say the 'Lamb of God' together.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Perfect first-born male lambs were slain as part of the Passover sacrifice; their blood had been sprinkled over the doorposts so that the angel of death would 'pass over' the people of Israel. Each year the Jewish people would celebrate this 'Passover' in remembrance. So images of Passover sacrifices would have been vividly evocative for those to whom John was speaking. The term 'Lamb of God' referred to the sacrificial nature of Jesus' mission, though not yet revealed as such until now. John the Baptist struggles to recognise Jesus, yet he declares that he is a witness to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God - this truth having been revealed as Jesus was being baptised. The baptism of Jesus has not been recorded in John's gospel but is alluded to in this testimony. Despite his closeness to Jesus, John is in much the same position as we are – twice he states that he didn't know who he was, yet his conviction is strong and so he still points others towards Jesus.

Reflection for Leaders

It is a quiet time of the year for us in most parishes. The school year has not yet begun and many people are still on summer holidays. Take time to reflect on our relationship with Jesus during this holiday time, and the struggles that we have to recognise him. We cannot ever physically know Jesus in the usual human sense. Like all human experience, physical knowledge of a person is limited unless there is a very intimate relationship involved. Our relationship with Jesus must come under the spotlight today, as we examine in what ways we do know him; this might be through his presence in the Church, in the Scriptures, in the care and concern of people in our community, in our prayer, and in the action of the Liturgy. Think about which of these is the most vibrant form of 'presence' for you. John's mission, as ours is, was to point Jesus out to the people. Who pointed Jesus out to you? In what way could you point him out to others? During this week, share something of your journey of faith with someone else.

Liturgy Outline

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you sent us your Holy Spirit to guide us and protect us always. Help us to remember that your spirit is with us in all that we do. Amen

FIRST READING Isaiah 49:3, 5-6
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 40
 Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included this week)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL John 1:29-34
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: God knows our needs and listens to our prayers, so let us bring them in confidence:

- That the church be a place of justice and mercy, peace and harmony
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to live by hope and encourage each other
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the courage to share our faith with others and point Jesus out
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That people everywhere learn to live with integrity and fairness
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For an attitude of openness to listen to prophet people who sometimes challenge us or make us feel uncomfortable
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of challenge, remove from us the things that stop us from welcoming Jesus with joy. We pray this through Jesus Christ our Lord
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

In today's reading Jesus invites two brothers to follow him. Jesus asks them to leave their boats, nets, homes and families behind and come and be his disciples. Do the brothers go? Why do they do this? What would Zebedee think when this happened? Jesus wants us to follow him as well. How can we do this in our everyday lives? Is it easy to be kind and obedient, loving God more than everything else in our lives and encouraging others to do this as well?



Gospel

Matthew 4:17-23

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus started preaching, "Turn back to God! The kingdom of heaven will soon be here."

While Jesus was walking along the shore of Lake Galilee, he saw two brothers. One was Simon, also known as Peter, and the other was Andrew. They were fishermen, and they were casting their net into the lake.

Jesus said to them, "Come with me! I will teach you how to bring in people instead of fish." Right then the two brothers dropped their nets and went with him.

Jesus walked on until he saw James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were in a boat with their father, mending their nets. Jesus asked them to come with him too. Right away they left the boat and their father and went with Jesus.

Jesus went all over Galilee, teaching in the Jewish meeting places and preaching the good news about God's kingdom.

He also healed every kind of disease and sickness.

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Isaiah 9:2-4

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

Those who walked in the dark have seen a bright light. And it shines upon everyone who lives in the land of darkest shadows.

Our Lord, you have made your nation stronger. Because of you, its people are glad and celebrate like workers at harvest time or soldiers dividing what they have taken.

You have broken the power of those who oppressed and enslaved your people. You have rescued them as you did from Midian.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 27

Response: **The Lord is my light and my salvation.**

You, Lord, are the light that keeps me safe. I am not afraid of anyone. You protect me, and I have no fears.

I ask only one thing, Lord:

Let me live in your house every day of my life.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

My dear friends, as a follower of our Lord Jesus Christ, I beg you to get along with each other. Don't take sides. Always try to agree in what you think.

Several people from Chloe's family have already reported to me that you keep arguing with each other.

They have said that some of you claim to follow me, while others claim to follow Apollos or Peter or Christ.

Has Christ been divided up? Was I nailed to a cross for you? Were you baptised in my name?

Christ did not send me to baptise. He sent me to tell the good news without using big words that would make the cross of Christ lose its power.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a fishing rod or a net.

Images from the Readings

- Turn back to God!
- Come with me!
- Right away they left everything and went with Jesus
- A bright light has shone on everyone
- Get along with each other

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

I wonder why we have a fishing rod (or net) here today? When Jesus met Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John, what were they doing? (Fishing and mending nets) They were the very first people that Jesus called to follow him.

Why do you think he chose fishermen rather than religious people to be his special friends?

How would these fishermen have felt? They must have been excited because they dropped everything and went straight away.

Do you think this was hard or easy for them? What do you think their father would have said when they did that?

Have you ever met anyone that was so wonderful that you would like to take your Mum and Dad and go to be with them?

Do you know that Jesus still calls people today? He has called you. He wants us to join him in his work, and we don't have to leave home. How do you think we can do this?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to learn off by heart the first verse of today's psalm so that they can pray it when they are anxious:

“You, Lord, are the light that keeps me safe. I am not afraid of anyone. You protect me, and I have no fears.”

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The gospel announcing the beginning of Jesus' public ministry is read in the context of the prophecy of Isaiah, which foretells the coming of a bright light and the rescue of the oppressed and enslaved. As John the Baptist was silenced, the ministry of Jesus began to take off in earnest. Jesus carries on and expands the message of John, showing that this voice is not lost. It is a voice that calls people from their work to a new kind of work; it is a voice that teaches with authority; that heals diseases and sickness; and proclaims very good news. Galilee was an area to the north of Israel where both Jew and Gentile were present. Those who heard Jesus preaching among them needed to make a stand on whether they believed in him – those who did formed the first Christian communities who gathered together to pray and remember his teachings and the stories of his life and ministry. Around the time 60 – 100 AD these stories and teachings were written down as the basis for the New Testament: the four gospels, an account of the early church (Acts), many of the letters of Paul and others to various communities and the book of Revelation (Apocalypse). Yet even in these early faith communities there were divisions and rivalries, as is shown in the second reading when Paul pleads for unity. In today's gospel, Jesus calls four fishermen to form the basis of his own little community of special disciples, of whom the bishops of the church are successors.

Reflection for Leaders

Jesus chose fishermen and told them that he would teach them how to bring in people instead of fish. They had to leave everything behind to follow him. Their new role was to catch people for Christ. How can we, as followers of Christ, do this? Preaching, teaching and healing comprised the ministry of Jesus, and it is this ministry that we are being asked to share. What exactly does the voice of Jesus call you to do and ask you to leave, to follow him? What makes leaving these things worthwhile? In what way do you most clearly hear the voice of Jesus in your experience? Be aware this week of the presence of Christ with you in all the mundane things of your daily life.

Liturgy Outline

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, help us to listen when you ask us to follow you; make us strong to walk with you each day and share your love with others that we meet. Amen

FIRST READING Isaiah 9:2-4
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 27
 The Lord is my light and my salvation
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 4:17-23
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: We are God's children who face life with hope. Let us pray to God in confidence:

- That the church will be a welcoming place for all who wish to turn back to God
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the light of Christ's presence will shine from us
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a spirit of generosity and unity as we respond to the call of Jesus in our lives
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For all who are sick, that they find God's comfort and presence through all who care for them
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God who calls us by name, you understand our every need before we ask. Show your goodness to us and those for whom we pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green



If you could have anything you wanted to make you happy, what would you choose? How long to do you think you would feel happy? Some people spend all their lives trying to find the secret of happiness. Often they look for fame and fortune, but these things can still leave people feeling empty. Jesus wanted his followers to know about the things that make us truly happy forever. He gives us a picture of the qualities that God desires his people to have. These are sometimes called the 'Beatitudes', which means blessed or happy.

Gospel

Matthew 5:1-12ab

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the side of a mountain and sat down. Jesus' disciples gathered around him, and he taught them:

"God blesses those people who depend only on him. They belong to the kingdom of heaven!

God blesses those people who grieve. They will find comfort!

God blesses those people who are humble. The earth will belong to them!

God blesses those people who want to obey him more than to eat or drink. They will be given what they want!

God blesses those people who are merciful. They will be treated with mercy!

God blesses those people whose hearts are pure. They will see him!

God blesses those people who make peace. They will be called his children!

God blesses those people who are treated badly for doing right. They belong to the kingdom of heaven

God will bless you when people insult you, mistreat you, and tell all kinds of evil lies about you because of me.

Be happy and excited! You will have a great reward in heaven."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ZEPHANIAH

If you humbly obey the Lord, then come and worship him. If you do right and are humble, you might be safe on that day when the Lord shows his anger.

I won't destroy any of you that are truly humble and come to me for safety.

The people of Israel who survive will live right and refuse to tell lies. They will eat in peace, and no one will bother them.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 146

Response: **Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs!**

God always keeps his word.

He gives justice to the poor and food to the hungry.

The Lord sets prisoners free and heals blind eyes.

He gives a helping hand to everyone who falls.

The Lord loves good people and looks after strangers.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

My dear friends, remember what you were when God chose you. The people of this world didn't think that many of you were wise. Only a few of you were in places of power, and not many of you came from important families.

But God chose the foolish things of this world to put the wise to shame. He chose the weak things of this world to put the powerful to shame.

What the world thinks is worthless, useless, and nothing at all is what God has used to destroy what the world considers important.

God did all this to keep anyone from bragging to him.

You are God's children.

He sent Christ Jesus to save us and to make us wise, acceptable, and holy. So if you want to brag, do what the Scriptures say and brag about the Lord.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a wrapped present

Images from the Readings

- God's values, opposite those of the world
- humbly obeying and worshipping
- justice to the poor
- God chose the foolish things to shame the wise
- Brag about the Lord

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Did you get some presents at Christmas time? Were you happy when you opened them and saw what you had got? Presents can sometimes make us happy for a little while, but sometimes we get tired of our things and then wish we had something else. What do you think could make you happy forever?

Today Jesus shares with us the secret of being happy forever. It is surprising, because it is sort of upside-down from the way most people think.

This gospel is sometimes called 'The sermon on the Mount' or 'The Beatitudes'. (Beatitudes means 'blessed' or 'happy').

Do you think this is an important message? Why? (it describes what a Christian should be like)

If we choose to live the values and qualities that Jesus tells us to, what will happen?

Think again about what Jesus said. What part of this message touches you most deeply at this moment?

Do you know anyone who does what is right, says kind things, forgives people who hurt them? Are these people happy? Why?

Is it easy to be so blessed, or is it hard work?

No one can ever take away our generosity and trust in God.

Act of Worship

Re-read the Beatitudes. Invite the children to hold hands and pray for each other in all their difficulties.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The first reading from the prophet Zephaniah calls people to seek humility and integrity. It is through small and humble things that many people have found holiness. The Beatitudes continue this theme, but they are such a paradox that they can only be understood in the light of faith in God. They are at the heart of the Christian message and they are diametrically opposed to the way of the world. In fact they reverse the understanding that wealth and power were signs of God's blessing, and poverty and suffering indicated God's punishment. This automatically puts Christians into conflict with the accepted norms of society. Only Matthew's account has Jesus giving this teaching on a mountain, the perfect complement for the new law of Jesus as the completion of the Law of Moses, given on Mount Sinai so many generations before.

Reflection for Leaders

We find it hard to view poverty, mourning, hunger and persecution as blessings, and we are called to do all we can to alleviate the sufferings of others. Yet Jesus is showing us that all these sufferings reveal to us our need for God; and we can identify that those who are prosperous, comfortable and content find it much more difficult to really believe. Money, comfort and satisfaction can prevent us from seeing that without God we are lost, and human happiness without God is very transient. Those who embrace the concept of the Beatitudes – those who are not self-satisfied, who mourn over sin, who long for God's justice and peace, those who do not judge others and are quick to forgive, those are the ones who are living the way that God desires people to live. Who do you know who embodies one of the beatitudes? Which of the beatitudes touches you most deeply at this present moment? Recall a personal experience of loss that illustrates for you the impermanent or unsatisfying nature of human happiness. What message did you take from your suffering? During this week identify and consciously practice at least one way of showing humility in your daily life. It might be something like avoiding contradicting others, or not making excuses, or respecting other people's opinions.

Liturgy Outline

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, Jesus shared the secret of everlasting happiness with us. Help us to live by your values and share this happiness with others.
Amen

FIRST READING Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 146

Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs!
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 5:1-12ab

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: God is so good! With gratitude, let us ask our faithful God to bless us with every good gift:

- That our leaders in the church and the government will treat all people with respect and dignity
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the values Jesus teaches us in the Beatitudes become the measuring stick for the way we live as Christians
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a spirit of humility in all our relationships with others
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the courage to reach out and help all those who mourn and grieve
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of blessings, hear the prayers that we make for ourselves and others through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

45
The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

What would happen to life in our world if there was no light? In Antarctica the sun does not shine for six months of the year, and the other six months it does not set. But we order our days by the setting and rising of the sun – often when Daylight Saving comes in or finishes it can take some time for us to adjust. Jesus reminds us of the importance of 'light' to our vision, and 'salt' to our taste buds. At our baptism we were given the light of Christ. When we share this with others we help them to 'see' more clearly, and make our world a better place. Jesus is telling us to be the people that we were made to be.



Gospel

Matthew 5:13-16

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus said to his disciples:

“You are like salt for everyone on earth. But if salt no longer tastes like salt, how can it make food salty? All it is good for is to be thrown out and walked on.

“You are like light for the whole world. A city built on top of a hill cannot be hidden, and no one would light a lamp and put it under a clay pot. A lamp is placed on a lamp stand, where it can give light to everyone in the house. Make your light shine, so that others will see the good that you do and will praise your Father in heaven.

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Isaiah 58:7-10

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

The Lord says this: Share your food with everyone who is hungry, and share your home with the poor and homeless. Give clothes to all in need and don't turn away your own relatives.

Then your light will shine like the dawning sun, and you will quickly heal. Your honesty will protect you as you advance, and the glory of the Lord will defend you from behind. Then you will call for help, and the Lord will answer, “Here I am!”

Don't oppress others or falsely accuse them or say cruel things. Give your food to the hungry, and care for the helpless.

Then your light will shine in the darkness, and your darkest hour will be like the noonday sun.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 112

Response: **A light rises in the darkness for the upright**

Those who worship the Lord will be so kind and merciful and good, that they will be a light in the dark for others who do the right thing. Life will go well for those who freely lend and are honest in business.

They are dependable and not afraid. They will always be remembered and greatly praised, because they were kind and freely gave to the poor.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brothers and sisters: When I came and told you the mystery that God had shared with us, I didn't use big words or try to sound wise. In fact, while I was with you, I made up my mind to speak only about Jesus Christ, who had been nailed to a cross.

At first, I was weak and trembling with fear. When I talked with you or preached, I didn't try to prove anything by sounding wise. I simply let God's Spirit show his power. That way you would have faith because of God's power and not because of human wisdom.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, lectionary, a candle, a small dish of salt, a tea-light candle for each child.

Images from the Readings

- Like salt and light
- Allowing our light to shine for others
- Sharing with those in need
- Being generous, merciful and just
- Let God's Spirit show power

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. What are your favourite foods? What makes them so tasty?

Have you ever tasted salt all by itself? When it is used on food it brings out the flavour of the food. But by itself its taste is really strong. (Offer the dish for the children to taste a few grains of salt – rock salt with large crystals could be useful)

Do you know what else salt is good for? (Preserving things, antiseptic – e.g. saline solution)

The food that we find most enjoyable is often salty.

Jesus told us that we were to be like salt and like light. We know that salt enhances the flavour of our food. I wonder what use light is to us? Can you think of what would happen if we had no light? How do you feel when it is very dark?

Is it easy to see then? When Jesus spoke about putting a lamp on a lamp stand, what does that mean for us?

We received the light of Christ at our baptism. Now Jesus wants us to be the very best people that we were made to be. When we are, people will know that it is God that the people who see us will turn to.

Act of Worship

Light a tea-light candle for each child. Pray a litany together:

For the light of day

We praise you, O God

For the moon and the stars

We praise you, O God

For electric lights, candlelight and firelight

We praise you, O God

For the light that others have been to us

We praise you, O God

For Jesus, the light of the world

We praise you, O God

Background to the Readings for Leaders

In the ancient world salt was absolutely essential as a preservative to enable food to be kept and as a seasoning to make it palatable. It is also an excellent antiseptic. The people of Israel often referred to the Law of God as 'salt' because it was what gave flavour to life and preserved them as God's chosen people. It was also compared to a light, which showed them the path of life. Like salt, peoples for whom it was not readily accessed at the flick of a switch carefully conserved light. Oil lamps were hung high to illuminate as large an area as possible. Even cities were built on the highest part of a hill so that they could be easily defended and were a visible sign of the power of their rulers to protect their citizens. Jerusalem, the city on the hill, was the great focal point for the people then just as it is for so many peoples today. Matthew's writing was to encourage his early Christian readers. At the time of writing they had recently been expelled from the synagogues, and they would have been anxious about what the future held for them. Jesus' words call for them, individually and as a group, to stand out from the crowd and remind others that God is with them.

Reflection for Leaders

Jesus gives a new focus to all the images of salt and light with his call for us to be a witness to God's presence with all people. Do you see the church as 'salt of the earth' and 'light for the world' in your community or in the world today? Where do you look for inspiration and encouragement? Jesus' words challenge each of us to not lose our 'flavour' or hide our 'light', but to keep the gift of our faith alive and fresh; when we take it for granted we let it become tasteless. In what practical ways can we do this? Are there any areas of your life that have been dull and tasteless and lost their appeal? What can you do about this? How can we possibly be the best people that we are made to be? During this week identify one of your unique gifts and talents and use it for the benefit of someone else.

Liturgy Outline

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, we became your children at our baptism. Help us always to walk as children of the light, touching the lives of others with your love and your truth. Amen

FIRST READING

Isaiah 58:7-10
Reader: The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 112
 A light rises in the darkness for the upright
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Reader: The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL

Matthew 5:13-16

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Placing our trust in our faithful God this Waitangi Day, let us pray to God with confidence:

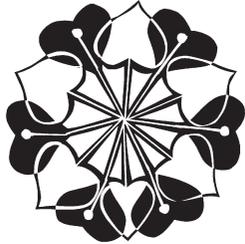
- That our Church shines as a bright light of hope in our world
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a spirit of unity, respect and co-operation with each other in our country, our community and our homes
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a spirit of generosity in sharing what we have with those who have less
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the courage to let our own light shine so that the good we do will give glory to God
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Gracious God, our hope and our light, gather us and those for whom we pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

When Moses was leading God's people through the desert, God gave them ten rules or commandments to help the people to live in God's way. Today we hear Jesus remind his followers if these "rules for life."

Gospel

Matthew 5:23-24

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus said to his disciples:

"If you are about to place your gift on the altar and remember that someone is angry with you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. Make peace with that person, then come back and offer your gift to God."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Sirach 15:15-20

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF SIRACH

If you really want to, You can faithfully obey the Lord's commands.
 The Lord gives you the choice between fire and water. Take the one you want.
 You can also choose between life and death. The one you want is yours.
 The Lord is very wise. He can do anything, and he sees everything.
 The Lord watches over everyone who respects him, and he knows everything that anyone does. The Lord did not command us to sin and do wrong.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 119

Response: **Happy are they who follow the law of the Lord!**

Our LORD, you bless everyone who lives right and obeys your Law.
 You bless all of those who follow your commands from deep in their hearts.

You have ordered us always to obey your teachings;
 I don't ever want to stray from your laws.

Point out your rules to me, and I won't disobey even one of them.
 Help me to understand your Law; I promise to obey it with all my heart.

Second Reading

Corinthians 2:6-10

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brothers and sisters:

We use wisdom when speaking to people who are mature in their faith. But it is not the wisdom of this world or of its rulers, who will soon disappear. We speak of God's hidden mysterious wisdom that God decided to use for our glory long before the world began.

The rulers of this world didn't know anything about his wisdom. If they had known about it, they would not have nailed the glorious Lord to a cross. But it is just as the Scriptures say, "What God has planned for people who love him is more than eyes have seen or ears have heard. It has never even entered our minds!"
 God's Spirit has shown you everything. His Spirit finds out everything, even what is deep in the mind of God.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a chart of the commandments

Images from the Readings

- Fire and water
- Life and death
- Freedom of choice
- God has a plan
- Obey God

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Who did God give the Ten Commandments to?

What are those rules for? People were confused and uncertain about how to live in a way pleasing to God. So God gave them the Ten Commandments.

What were these rules suppose to do for the people?

What do rules make you do?

Do people always listen to rules?

Think about where you use rules in your life? (Classroom, driving, law, church)

Ten commandments were there to guide them and teach them how to show their love for him and each other. Moses wrote the Ten Commandments down on slabs of stone, but we should keep them written on our hearts.

How can we do this? (by obeying the laws, following rules)

What happens when people don't follow rules?

The importance of following rules is that they keep us from harm and encourage us to do the right thing. Are they always easy to obey?

Often they are not, but we should remember that the Commandments are the rules given by God to us to keep us fro harm and help us to live the right way. If we do disobey he is forgiving and continues to love us regardless.

Act of Worship

Sing "This is my command" Living waters #70 (or any song that you feel suitable for the children to sing)

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The book of Sirach from which this first reading is taken is a collection of proverbial teachings. The ancients believed that certain actions had within them the very seeds of their consequences: wise choices result in blessing, foolish or evil choices result in misfortune or punishment. The reading today addresses human freedom and human choice.

The longer we live the more we realize that life opens up for us a series of choices. These choices form the path that our life will take. Even in the most difficult of situations, we can still make choices about how we will deal with them. Obedient people do what they are told; wise people choose what good they will do.

In the Gospel, Jesus gives us an example of true wisdom. Choosing to serve people is to be preferred to serving the Law. Jesus is not saying the Law is wrong. Rather he brought the Law to life when he gave it a new interpretation so it could meet the needs of the people of his day. Jesus is saying that true wisdom, which comes to us through the Holy Spirit, will help us to see and to choose ways of being, doing and helping that will best meet the needs of the people in our lives. This is a very challenging way to live.

Reflection for Leaders

God's decision to give us free choice is very challenging because we can choose evil as well as good. Jesus warns us not only to avoid the extremes of evil, like murder, but also to avoid the little steps, like anger, that can take us down the path in such a direction.

It is really difficult to deal with the kind of feelings that can lead to wrong doing. Leaving your gift at the altar because you are still angry and going back to sort out your disagreement with your family is a very demanding challenge. What memories do you have of arguments and hassles as your family is getting ready to go to Mass, especially if you need to leave early because you are leading Children's Liturgy? How does this affect your readiness for Ministry? for Eucharist? How do you reconcile or make peace?

Liturgy Outline

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you gave us laws, commandments, help us to follow them like your Son Jesus as we listen to your Word. Amen

FIRST READING Sirach 15:15-20
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 119
 Happy are they who follow the law of the Lord!
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* 1 Corinthians 2:6-10
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 5:23-24
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Offering our needs to our God who listens and delivers, let us pray:

- For the Church, that it continues to teach according to God's law.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the Holy Spirit, that it guides us to be obedient and do what is right.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we may learn to be better people and continue to do things the right way.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the leaders of our church, community and countries be positive role model's of doing what is right by being fair and using your rules as a guide.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God our Father, help us to keep your commandments Holy and learn to be good followers of your Son Jesus Christ.

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

Does anyone know what an enemy is? (Someone who hates another person and wants to hurt or harm them.) Today we hear Jesus telling us that we must learn to forgive and love our enemies, and never to hate them.



Gospel Matthew 5:38-48

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus said to his disciples:

“You know that you have been taught, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to try to get even with a person who has done something to you. “When someone slaps your right cheek, turn and let that person slap your other cheek. If someone sues you for your shirt, give up your coat as well. If a soldier forces you to carry his pack one mile, carry it two miles. When people ask you for something, give it to them. When they want to borrow money, loan it to them.

“You have heard people say, ‘Love your neighbors and hate your enemies.’ But I tell you to love your enemies and pray for anyone who mistreats you. Then you will be acting like your Father in heaven.

“He makes the sun rise on both good and bad people. And sends rain for the one who do right and for ones who do wrong. “If you love only those people who love you, will God reward you for that? Even tax collectors love their friends. If you greet only your friends, what’s so great about that? Don’t even unbelievers do that? But you must always act like your Father in heaven.”

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

The LORD told Moses to say to all of the people of Israel:

Keep yourselves holy. I am the LORD your God, and I am holy. Don’t secretly hate someone. Correct anyone who does wrong, and you won’t be guilty of that person’s sin.

Don’t try to get even. And don’t hold grudges. You must love others as much as you love yourself. I am the LORD your God.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 103

Response:

The Lord is kind and merciful

With all my heart I praise the LORD,
And with all that I am I praise his holy name!
With all my heart I praise the LORD!
I will never forget how kind he has been.

The LORD forgives our sins, heals us when we are sick.
Just as parents are kind to their children,
The LORD is kind to all who worship him.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 3:18-20

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brothers and sisters:

Don’t fool yourselves! If any of you think you are wise in the things of this world, you will have to become foolish before you can be truly wise.

This is because God considers the wisdom of the world to be foolish.

It is just as the Scriptures say, “God catches the wise when they try to outsmart him.” The Scriptures also say, “The Lord knows that the plans made by wise people are useless.”

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, crucifix

Images from the Readings

- Love one another
- Wise vs foolish
- Forgiveness
- Make peace
- Pray for your enemies

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Jesus tells us to love as God loves; that is, all people even those we do not like! Is it easy to love someone who hurts us?

How do you feel when someone treats you badly?

Do you continue to be their friend? (bully, peer pressure)

What has Jesus told us to do? We should not let our anger win. We must try to be generous and kind, and to become friends. This is never easy, but we should try to do that we know is right. What is another example where people don't get along? (war) All over the world many different nations are enemies and their people are at war. Many people are trying hard to bring peace to these places and to encourage friendship, just as Jesus wanted.

How can we help to bring a more peaceful environment? (Being nice to each other, respect, sharing, and learning to say sorry because we too can be the person that is hurting someone else.)

Act of Worship

Sing "Children of God" Christopher Walker AOV 2:37 (or another appropriate song)

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Jesus' instruction on the reinterpretation of the Law, begun last Sunday, continues today. Once again we realize that true wisdom, which comes to us through the

Holy Spirit, will enrich us with insight into life in ways we never thought possible before. We are quite familiar with the command to love because we have read it so often in the gospels.

Here in Leviticus we are asked to understand this love from a new perspective. Firstly we are asked to be holy as God is holy. It is from this concept of divine holiness that the contrast of love and hate must be understood. The life of holiness we are asked to embrace, is a life lived in community, patterned on the holiness of God. Our likeness to God is determined by the way we relate to others. This is the standard that Jesus puts before us when he commands us to "be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect". It takes a life time of living to come anywhere near the complete, fulfilled and undivided potential of our growth in holiness, but it remains our goal!

Three exaggerated examples illustrate what Jesus means: offering the other cheek to be struck, handing over even the cloak that might be used as a blanket at night and carrying the soldier's gear much further than required are extremely creative ways of reinterpreting the Law. Give much more than is asked! Disarm your enemies with your willingness to go beyond what is required! Your generosity will shame them and you will gain honour in their sight – a total reversal of what they set out to achieve. Jesus is not suggesting that we allow ourselves to be abused, neither is he advocating passivity – rather he is describing what some people might call "active non-resistance". Instead of retaliating in kind, Jesus is teaching us to "right the wrongs" by overcoming evil with goodness, not with revenge. This is what makes Jesus' teaching so extremely radical.

Reflection for Leaders

In the heat of the moment, it is so difficult to choose **not** to answer back, **not** to repay the first insult with worse, **not** to raise a fist in protest. How much easier it is at times to end a friendship rather than persevere in healing the "injuries" inflicted on each other. And how hard it is to admit our own fault, to take responsibility for our own hasty words, thoughtless actions or the things we have failed to do! All the more reason then to learn and practice creative, respectful and non-violent ways to respond to people and situations. Then we don't get caught out so easily when the going gets tough! Peace begins with you. It spreads to your family and friends. It becomes yeast in your community. It has the capacity to transform the world. This brings us back to the first reading – and the call to embrace holiness and love. Our likeness to God, in whose image and likeness we are made, is determined by the way we relate to others. What community groups or organizations are promoting healthy relationship living, parenting skills, or non-violent conflict resolution (mediation) in your local school, parish, community? There is always something more we can learn about the ways we relate to God, to ourselves and to each other!

Liturgy Outline

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, God of Peace, have mercy on us and help us to understand how to show mercy to those who hurt us. Amen

FIRST READING Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 103

The Lord is kind and merciful
(Or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* 1 Corinthians 3:18-20

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 5:38-48

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Loving God, we offer up our gifts, let us pray:

- That we be selfless people and give to those less fortunate
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to love others, for example the way you love us.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the Holy Spirit, that it support us in times that others don't love us so that we may forgive rather than seek revenge.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to be like you God and have mercy on those who may hurt us.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God the Father, fill our world with love, especially those countries at war. Bring peace to people's heart so they may do your will.

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

The Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**Green**

We are more precious to God than any living creature, and he will always take care of us. he will provide whatever we need, so we should not worry or be afraid, for he is always watching over us.

Gospel

Matthew 6:24-34

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus said to his disciples:

“You cannot be the slave of two masters! You will like one more than the other or be more loyal to one than the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

“I tell you not to worry about your life. Don't worry about having something to eat, drink, or wear. Isn't life more than food or clothing? Look at the birds in the sky! They don't even store grain in barns. Yet your Father in heaven takes care of them. Aren't you worth more than birds?

“Can worry make you live longer? Why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow. They don't work hard to make their clothes.

But I tell you that Solomon with all his wealth was not as well clothed as one of them. God gives such beauty to everything that grows in the fields, even though it is here today and thrown into a fire tomorrow. He will surely do even more for you! Why do you have such little? “Don't worry and ask yourselves, ‘Will we have anything to eat? Will we have anything to drink? Will we have clothes to wear?’ Only people who don't know God are always worrying about such things. Your Father in heaven knows that you need all of these.

But more than anything else, Put God's work first and do what he wants. Then all the other things will be yours as well.

“Don't worry about tomorrow. It will take care of itself, you have enough to worry about today.”

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Isaiah 49:14-15

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

The people of Jerusalem said, “The LORD has deserted us and forgotten all about us.”

The LORD replied: “Could a mother forget a child that nurses at her breast or fail to love the one who came from her own body? Even if a mother could forget, I will never forget you.”

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 62

Response:

Rest in God alone, my soul.

Only God can save me,
And I calmly wait for him.
God alone is the mighty rock
That keeps me safe
And the fortress
Where I feel secure.

God saves me and honors me.
He is that mighty rock
Where I find safety.
Trust God, my friends,
And always tell him
Each one of your concerns.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle

Images from the Readings

- Don't worry
- God is always near
- God is a provider
- He is a rock

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Often we worry about small unimportant things. If we worry about things and ourselves that affect our lives, we can grow into selfish people who always put our own needs first. Jesus wanted us to realize that God will provide everything we need. What were the two examples he gave us of God's constant care?

Why do you think we worry? (Scared of having nothing..)

How do we handle being worried? (Deny being frightened, say its ok when its not, think only of ourselves)

What does Jesus want us to do? He wants us to share our worries with god and realize just how precious than all the birds and the flowers. If we have a worry, whether it is large or small, it never seems to be so bad if we can share it with someone else and talk it over. The worry or trouble seems to grow smaller and less important.

Like that we should trust God, and like we would with a problem, tell him. How can we do this? (through prayer, telling someone you trust, reconciliation)

Act of Worship

Sing "Come as You Are" Deirdre Browne – AOV 1:31

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Today's first reading is an extraordinary exchange between the nation of Israel and God. In ancient societies, cities and nations were characterized as female. The nation of Israel cries out in great distress that she has been forsaken, abandoned by her lord and master, the God of Israel.

Then God speaks – and the prophet employs one of the most strikingly tender and compassionate images of God and God's relationship to the People of God that one could possibly imagine: the relationship between a mother and the nursing child of her womb. For some, the most startling feature of this metaphor is its feminine nature. But what better metaphor could there be to speak of God's total commitment to our needs that a mother suckling the child of her womb? An intimacy so profound, so completely self giving that nothing else can compare. This bond is the basis of our trust in God.

In the gospel the disciples are given yet another lesson in the meaning of discipleship. The disciples of Jesus work under the direction of the master. They serve God's Kingdom, distributing the goods of God's household. They are accountable to God for their ministry.

The feminine metaphor for God is kept alive for us but now it takes a different form. God is depicted as sowing and reaping crops and spinning cloth, roles that are usually associated with men and women respectively. God feeds and clothes the birds and the flowers of the field. We are so dear to God; surely we will be cared for as well as God cares for these birds and these flowers. Trust in God.

Reflection for Leaders

What greater privilege could be ours than that of continuing to build the reign of God? What greater commitment could you have than proclaiming the gospel to God's children? Sometimes it is a challenge to stay committed to such a calling; it takes time and energy to prepare, to relate to the children, to get to Church on time. God is reminding us in such challenging moments to do our very best, then let go and have confidence that God will see us through the task we have undertaken. God is like a woman nursing the child of her womb. She could not forget her child and God will not forget you. God cares for the birds and the lilies of the field. You are even more important to God so be sure that God will take good care of you.

Have the children ever planted flowers? What can they share with you of the needs and care of these plants – of their joy and delight in their flowering? What can you share with them about the way they were acting in the image and likeness of God? What can they understand of God's care for them from the way they have cared for their plants?

Liturgy Outline

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, we know you care and protect us always, so we place our trust in you as we learn more about you through your word.
Amen

FIRST READING Isaiah 49:14-15
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 62
 Rest in God alone, my soul.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 6:24-34
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

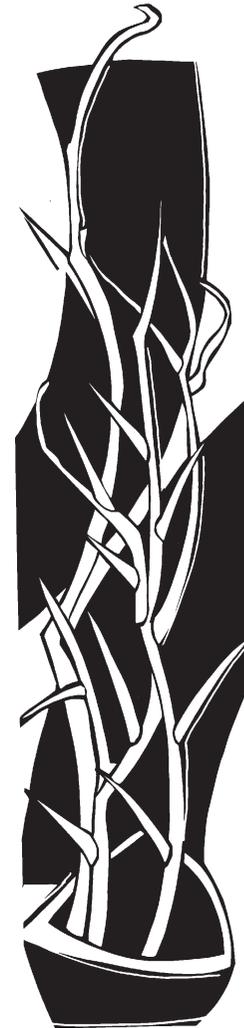
Leader: Protecting God, we know you will never forsake us so we pray:

- For that Church, that you give it strength to continue in it's work of guiding the faith of our young people.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That you guide our worried hearts in times we feel that you are not near.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the Holy Spirit to give us the strength to trust in God when we feel abandoned.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we serve you Lord, in all that we say and do to others.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Gracious God, I feel your love around me always. In times of trouble you are there. Your love always makes things right again because you share your unending goodness with me always.

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.



LENT

Readings

First Sunday of Lent

Violet

Have you ever thought about doing something that you know is not right? We call this 'temptation'. Even Jesus had to face temptations in his life. God wants all of us to make right choices, and this can be hard for us to do. In Lent, the forty days when we prepare for Easter, we will be encouraged to keep in touch with God, make right choices, be less selfish and more generous.



Gospel

Matthew 4:1-11

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert, so that the devil could test him. After Jesus went without eating for forty days and nights, he was very hungry. Then the devil came to him and said, "If you are God's Son, tell these stones to turn into bread."

Jesus answered, "The Scriptures say: 'No one can live only on food. People need every word that God has spoken.'"

Next, the devil took Jesus to the holy city and had him stand on the highest part of the temple. The devil said, "If you are God's Son, jump off. The Scriptures say: 'God will give his angels orders about you. They will catch you in their arms, and you will not hurt your feet on the stones.'"

Jesus answered, "The Scriptures also say, 'Don't try to test the Lord your God!' Finally, the devil took Jesus up on a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms on earth and their power. The devil said to him, "I will give all this to you, if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus answered, "Go away, Satan! The Scriptures say: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'"

Then the devil left Jesus and angels came to help him.

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

A reading from the book of Genesis

The Lord God took some earth and used it to make a man. God breathed into the man's nose, and the man started breathing. The Lord God had made a garden in a place called Eden, which was in the east, and he put the man there.

The Lord made all kinds of beautiful trees and all kinds of fruit trees grow in the garden. Two other trees were in the middle of the garden. One of the trees gave life, and the other showed the difference between right and wrong.

The snake was sneakier than any of the other wild animals that the Lord God had made. One day it came to the woman and asked, "Did God tell you not to eat fruit from any tree in the garden?"

The woman answered, "God said we could eat fruit from any tree in the garden except the one in the middle. He told us not to eat fruit from that tree or even touch it. If we do, we will die."

"No, you won't die!" the snake replied. God understands what will happen on the day you eat fruit from that tree. You will see what you have done, and you will know the difference between right and wrong, just as God does."

The woman stared at the fruit. It looked beautiful and tasty. She wanted the wisdom that it would give her, and she ate some of the fruit. She gave some to her husband Adam, and he ate it too. At once they saw what they had done, and they realised that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together to make clothes for themselves.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 51

Response: **Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

You are kind, God! Please have pity on me.

You are always merciful! Please wipe away my sins.

Create pure thoughts in me and make me faithful again.

Make me as happy as you did when you saved me;
make me want to obey!

Help me to speak, and I will praise you, Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Violet cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a simple cross and some sand. A basket with some Lenten practices written on cards – eg set table, make bed, dry dishes, share with others, remember to say thank you, forgive someone etc.

Images from the Readings

- Very hungry
- Go away, Satan!
- Angels came to help him
- They ate the fruit
- Shame

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Where do you think all good things come from? (God)

Why do you think it is so hard for us to be good?

This week we hear that Jesus went into the desert on his own for forty days.

Why do you think he did this? (not to get away from others but to spend time praying and thinking.)

Do you know what 'temptation' means? (thinking about and being drawn to do something that you know is wrong)

Jesus was faced with temptations just as we are. Do you think it was easy for Jesus to be good and make right

This is a special time in the Church year called Lent. The church looks a little like a desert without any flowers or holy water. We see the purple cloth used around the church and in Father's vestments. Purple is the colour for penance and sorrow.

Lent is a time when we pray and prepare for Easter. During this time we remember to think carefully about the choices that we make and think about the way God wants us to live. What sort of choices do you think God wants us to make this Lent?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to take a card home and put the Lenten practice (or one of their own choice) into action during the week.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Two written traditions of the Creation story were combined in the Genesis scriptures. Today's first reading is the older of these original traditions, and pictures God as a skilled artisan with an intimate relationship in the nurturing of humanity. Today's gospel follows immediately from the baptism of Jesus, and speaks to us of these very real and human temptations that Jesus suffered as Satan disputed the claim that he was the Son of God. The original Adam of Creation is replaced by Jesus, who loves God above all things. He does not repeat the mistakes of the first Adam – his love of God transcends all things, even the temptations of the master of temptations. Jesus makes his choice firm as he rejects Satan, using the Scriptures as his authority in response. Matthew depicts Jesus as the new Moses – the forty days in the desert recalls the forty days Moses spent on the mountain and the forty years the Israelites spent in the wilderness.

Reflection for Leaders

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Liturgy Outline

First Sunday of Lent

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, it can be hard for us to stay faithful and true. During this Lenten time strengthen us to keep our promises and come closer to you. Amen

FIRST READING Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 51
 Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 4:1-11
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Placing our trust in our faithful God this day, let us pray to God with confidence:

- That our Church shines as a bright light of hope in our world
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a spirit of unity, respect and co-operation with each other in our country, our community and our homes
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a spirit of generosity in sharing what we have with those who have less
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the courage to let our own light shine so that the good we do will give glory to God
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Gracious God, our hope and our light, gather us and those for whom we pray into your love. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Second Sunday of Lent

Violet



Where do you pray? When Jesus wanted to pray he would often find a quiet, peaceful place away from the crowds, where he could be alone with his heavenly father. What place did Jesus take his friends to, to pray? What happened to Jesus when he prayed? We call this 'the Transfiguration'. Jesus was covered in God's glory, just as he would be in heaven, and God's approval for him was apparent. These disciples would remember this later when Jesus was put to death

Gospel

Matthew 17:1-9

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus took Peter and the brothers James and John with him. They went up on a very high mountain where they could be alone. There in front of the disciples Jesus was completely changed. His face was shining like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.

All at once Moses and Elijah were there talking with Jesus. So Peter said to him, "Lord, it is good for us to be here! Let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

While Peter was still speaking, the shadow of a bright cloud passed over them. From the cloud a voice said, "This is my own dear Son, and I am pleased with him. Listen to what he says!"

When the disciples heard the voice, they were so afraid that they fell flat on the ground. But Jesus came over and touched them. He said, "Get up and don't be afraid!"

When they opened their eyes, they saw only Jesus.

On their way down from the mountain, Jesus warned his disciples not to tell anyone what they had seen until after the Son of Man had been raised from death.

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Genesis 12:1-4a

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS

The Lord said to Abraham, "Leave your country, your family, and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you.

"I will bless you and make you into a great nation. You will become famous and be a blessing to others. I will bless the people who say good things about you, but I will put a curse on anyone who says evil things about you. Everyone on earth will be blessed because of you."

So Abraham left, just as the Lord had told him to do.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 33

Response: **Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.**

The Lord is truthful; he can be trusted.

He loves justice and fairness, and he is kind to everyone

Everywhere on earth.

We depend on you, Lord, to help and protect us.

Be kind and bless us! We depend on you.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Violet cloth, Lectionary, a candle, and an icon of Jesus

Images from the Readings

- Be alone
- It is good for us to be here!
- Listen to him!
- Tell no one
- A blessing to others

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Have you ever climbed a mountain? People often went up mountains to come close to God, and this is why Jesus took some of his special friends with him. Do you remember who went with Jesus to the mountain top? (Peter James and John) What amazing thing happened while they were there? (Jesus' glory was shown to them.) We call this the 'Transfiguration' Who did the disciples see talking with Jesus? (Moses and Elijah – they were important prophets in Jewish history, people who passed on messages from God to the Jewish people) Why did God show this vision to the disciples? What was the special message that God gave to these disciples? (Jesus was God's own dear Son and they should listen to him). This message was to help us to live as Christians today. The disciples were very afraid when they heard this voice. Do you remember how Jesus calmed them down? (touched them and told them not to be afraid) How can we listen to and follow Jesus today? Do you think they were surprised when Jesus asked them to keep it a secret? Why would he do that?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to use the icon and the response of the psalm as an act of worship today. "Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you."

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The Hebrew tradition doesn't offer a definitive view of the nature of God. Jesus' own intimate relationship with God offers a more comprehensive picture of God's own nature – forgiving, loving, healing, redeeming. The ancient stories, much like the parables of Jesus, call us to think very seriously about who God is. In today's gospel Jesus is beginning his journey towards Jerusalem and the fate that waits him there. But the start of that journey is delayed by this awesome moment of revelation that we know as the Transfiguration – the moment when Jesus is glorified and revealed as the beloved Son of God, Messiah. This event is traditionally associated with Mt Tabor, and the voice from heaven echoed those words spoken at the baptism of Jesus. The appearance of Moses and Elijah links Jesus with the expectations of the Jewish people. Moses, representing the Law, and Elijah, the prophets, looked forward to God's supreme intervention in human affairs (Jesus). The desire of the disciples to preserve the moment by building shelters was in contrast to Jesus' aim of continuing the journey to its final outcome. Following this completion, the significance of this vision would become apparent.

Reflection for Leaders

Last week we explored the temptations experienced by the very human nature of Jesus. Today's text explores the event of the Transfiguration, which affirms the dual nature of Jesus as both man and God. This duality of nature is often difficult for us to comprehend; however it is one of the foundational beliefs of the Church. We must not repeat the reluctance of the disciples to believe and understand. We already have the whole picture. Just as Jesus was revealed as the beloved Son of God, we too can take our place as beloved children of God. What glimpses of the glory of God do you see in your daily life? Can you recall an experience, which has revealed another person to you in a completely new light? Or, have you been able to see attributes in someone that you had previously been unaware of? During this week, try as a follower of Jesus, to respond to people with greater generosity, forgiveness, acceptance and love.

Liturgy Outline

Second Sunday of Lent

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you showed the disciples the light of Jesus' glory. Help us to share that light with those we meet, so all will come to see your glory, Amen.

FIRST READING Genesis 12:1-4a
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 33
 Lord , let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 17: 1-9
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Let us bring all our needs and cares to God who cares for us:

- That our Church will always reveal God's glory
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the leaders in our community and government will have the courage to lead with justice, peace and generosity
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will share our blessings generously with others, especially those who are sick and lonely
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For balance in our lives, that we create the opportunities to spend some quiet time away to be alone with God
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Gracious God, our Saviour, you reveal your glory to us through your beloved Son. Help us to change and become more like him as we bring these prayers to you through Jesus Christ our Lord
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Third Sunday of Lent

Violet

Have you ever been thirsty? What do we need water for? When Jesus was thirsty he asked a Samaritan woman for some water. Because the Jews and the Samaritan had a long-standing hatred, this was a very significant encounter.



Gospel John 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-41

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

On his way to Galilee, Jesus came to the town of Sychar. It was near the field that Jacob had long ago given to this son Joseph. The well that Jacob had dug was still there, and Jesus sat down beside it because he was tired from travelling. It was noon, and after Jesus' disciples had gone into town to buy some food, a Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well.

Jesus asked her, "Would you please give me a drink of water?"

"You are a Jew," she replied, "and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink of water when Jews and Samaritans won't have anything to do with each other?"

Jesus answered, "You don't know what God wants to give you, and you don't know who is asking you for a drink. If you did, you would ask him for the water that gives life."

"Sir," the woman said, "you don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. Where are you going to get this life-giving water? Our ancestor Jacob dug this well for us, and his family and animals got water from it. Are you greater than Jacob?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again. But no one who drinks the water I give will ever be thirsty again. The water I give is like a flowing fountain that gives eternal life."

The woman replied, "Sir, please give me a drink of that water! Then I won't get thirsty and have to come to this well again."

She also told him, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. My ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews say Jerusalem is the only place to worship."

Jesus said to her: "Believe me, the time is coming when you won't worship God either on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans don't really know the one you worship. But we Jews do know the God we worship, and by using us God will save the world. But a time is coming, and it is already here! Even now the true worshippers are being led by the Spirit to worship the Father according to the truth. These are the

ones the Father is seeking to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship God must be led by the Spirit to worship him according to the truth."

The woman said, "I know that the Messiah will come. He is the one we call Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

"I am that one," Jesus told her, "and I am speaking to you now."

A lot of Samaritans in that town put their faith in Jesus. They came and asked him to stay in their town, and he stayed on for two days.

Many more Samaritans put their faith in Jesus because of what they heard him say. They told the woman, "We no longer have faith in Jesus just because of what you told us. We have heard him ourselves, and we are certain that he is the Saviour of the world!"

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Exodus 17:3-7

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF EXODUS

The people of Israel were thirsty and kept on complaining. They said, "Moses, did you bring us out of Egypt just to let us and our families and our animals die of thirst?"

Then Moses prayed, "Lord, what am I going to do with these people? They are about to stone me to death."

The Lord answered, "Take some of the leaders with you and go on ahead of the rest of the people. Take along the walking stick that you used to strike the Nile River, and when you get to the rock at Sinai, I will be there with you. Strike the rock with the stick, and water will pour out for the people to drink."

Moses did this while the leaders of the people watched. He named that place Massah and Meribah. This was because the people complained and tested the Lord by asking, "Is the Lord really with us?"

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 95

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

Sing joyful songs to the Lord!

Praise the mighty rock where we are safe.

Come to worship him with thankful hearts and songs of praise.

Listen to God's voice today!

Don't be stubborn and rebel as your ancestors did at Meribah and Massah out in the desert.

They tested God and saw the things he did.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Violet cloth, Lectionary, a candle, and a bucket of water with a rope tied to the handle.

Images from the Readings

- Tired from travelling
- Give me a drink of water
- Ask him for the water that gives life
- True worship

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Have you ever stayed somewhere that is really dry and hasn't had rain for a long time? What happens when it doesn't rain? Some places in the world don't get much rain, and water means life in places that are very dry. Can you think of any ways that they find enough water to live on? (Wells, bores, aqua ducts, irrigation etc) What do we do with water? (Washing ourselves, our clothes, bathing and swimming, watering plants, drinking) In today's gospel Jesus meets a woman at a well. He was very thirsty because he had been travelling. Have you ever felt really thirsty? In this dry country the well was a place where people would often meet and talk. Jesus talked with the woman. Can you remember what they said to each other? Were they talking about the same kind of water?

What happened to the woman because of Jesus?

What do you think Jesus meant by 'living water'?

When do we use water at Church as a symbol of Jesus' 'living water'? (at baptism, the holy water we use to sign ourselves with as we enter the church)

Do you remember the promises that were made for us when we were baptised?

We renew these promises again at Easter.

Act of Worship

Thank God for the gift of water. Invite the children to come up and sip a handful of water from the bucket. (Have a towel handy to dry hands afterwards)

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The reading from Exodus tells us how God provides water for the thirsty people newly liberated from slavery in Egypt. This water would sustain them on their journey to the Promised Land. The thirst of the Samaritan woman is more profound, and she is open to receiving the living water that Jesus offers. Hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans was longstanding because of cultural and religious differences resulting from the inclusion of pagan practices, which sullied the religious practices of the Samaritans over the centuries. Samaritans had built a 'break away' Temple on Mt Gerzim. At the time, social mores prevented men and women from speaking to each other in public, so Jesus contravenes all sorts of taboos to ask the woman for a drink. Her bucket would have been ritually unclean to the Jews in any case. The well is an important local meeting place for these people, and the fact that this woman was visiting it in the heat of the day indicates her exclusion from her community. But we are really hearing about this woman's thirst for spiritual satisfaction and her journey in faith towards God. Her amusement at his comments and the banter that develops through their dialogue is typical of interactions of the time and leads to a deeper conviction of spiritual truth, and eventually to the woman's powerful testimony which leads so many others to Jesus.

Reflection for Leaders

Sometimes we can have a very superficial understanding of our faith and what Jesus really offers us. Can you identify a time when your appreciation of your spiritual life has become acute and deeper? When have you experienced a personal invitation to faith? Had you been thirsting for God at the time? Visualise your spiritual life as a map with ups and downs. See if you can identify the points of change and what was happening at the time. Who assisted you on your faith journey at these times? What thirst do you have in your life at the present time? Are there others around you who might be thirsty for company or feeling excluded by society that you can reach out to during this week?

Liturgy Outline

Third Sunday of Lent

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
 Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, we thank you for the blessing of water and for the life giving water which you give us through Jesus at our baptism. Help us to share this with those who are thirsty. Amen

FIRST READING Exodus 17: 3-7
 Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 95
 If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL John 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-41
 Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
 Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: As loved children of God, let us come with confidence to God with all our prayers:

- That our Church will be a place where those who are thirsty for God will always find refreshment and life
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For those who feel rejected in our school or neighbourhood, that we will learn to include them and be friends
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a sense of thankfulness to God for the everyday blessings of sufficient water, good, shelter and clothing
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That families everywhere will be strong and supportive of each other
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Merciful and loving God, you give us all we need to live life fully. Help us to share your love with all we meet, especially those who are thirsting for you and your goodness. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Violet



What do you think it might be like to be blind? Think about how you would do all the things you have already done today if you could not see. What do we know about the blind man in this story? How did Jesus give him back his sight? What new things would the man have been able to see and do after that? What happened to the man afterwards that was even better than getting his sight?

Gospel

John 9:1, 6-12, 35-38

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

One day as Jesus walked along, he saw a man who had been blind since birth. Jesus spit on the ground. He made some mud and smeared it on the man's eyes. Then he said, "Go and wash off the mud in the Siloam Pool." The man went and washed in Siloam, which means 'One Who Is Sent.' When he had washed off the mud, he could see.

The man's neighbours and the people who had seen him begging wondered if he really could be the same man. Some of them said he was the same beggar, while others said he only looked like him. But he told them, "I am that man."

"Then how can you see?" they asked.

He answered, "Someone named Jesus made some mud and smeared it on my eyes. He told me to go and wash it off in Siloam Pool. When I did, I could see."

"Where is he now?" they asked.

"I don't know," he answered.

When Jesus heard what had happened, he went and found the man.

Then Jesus asked, "Do you have faith in the Son of Man?"

He replied, "Sir, if you will tell me who he is, I will put my faith in him."

"You have already seen him," Jesus answered, "and right now he is talking with you."

The man said, "Lord, I put my faith in you!"

Then he worshipped Jesus.

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

1Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

A READING FROM THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

The Lord said to Samuel: "Take some olive oil with you and go to a man named Jesse who lives in Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."

When Jesse and his sons got there, Samuel saw Jesse's oldest son, Eliab, and thought, "He must be the one the Lord has chosen."

But the Lord told Samuel, "Don't choose him just because he is tall and handsome. He isn't the one I have chosen. People judge others by what they look like, but I don't. I judge by what is in a person's heart."

Jesse sent seven of his sons to Samuel, but each time Samuel would say, "The Lord has not chosen him." Finally, Samuel asked Jesse, "Do you have any more sons?" Jesse answered, "Yes, my youngest son David is out taking care of the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him. We won't start until he gets here." Jesse sent for David, and he came. He was a healthy, good-looking boy with a sparkle in his eyes.

The Lord told Samuel, "This is the one. Pour the olive oil on his head." Samuel poured the oil on David's head while his brothers watched. At that moment the Lord's Spirit took control of David and stayed with him from then on.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 23

Response: **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

You, Lord, are my shepherd. I will never be in need;

You let me rest in fields of green grass.

You lead me to streams of peaceful water, and you refresh my life.

You are true to your name, and you lead me along the right paths.

I may walk through valleys as dark as death, but I won't be afraid.

You are with me, and your shepherd's rod makes me feel safe.

While my enemies watch, you honour me as your guest, and you fill my cup until it overflows. Your kindness and love will always be with me each day of my life.

Second Reading

Ephesians 5:1-2, 8-10

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

Brothers and sisters: Do as God does. After all, you are his dear children. Let love be your guide. Christ loved us and offered his life for us as a sacrifice that pleases God.

You used to be like people living in the dark, but now you are people of the light because you belong to the Lord. So act like people of the light and make your light shine. Be good and honest and truthful, as you try to please the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Violet cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a bowl of water and some mud in a saucer

Images from the Readings

- He could see
- Jesus found the man
- Lord, I put my faith in you!
- God judges the heart
- People of the light

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Have you ever played a game where you wore a blindfold?

What did it feel like when you couldn't see? Do you know anyone who is blind? What is life like for them? What special things do they have to help them live? (white cane, Braille, guide dogs, buzzers on pedestrian crossings etc) What do you know about the blind man in today's gospel? He had been born blind, so had he been able to work? How did he make a living? (he begged)

What did Jesus do to the man that enabled him to see?

The man had to be obedient and do what Jesus told him to receive his sight back. How do you think the man felt when he had washed off the mud? The man had to do some other things as well; he had to tell people what had happened to him, and when Jesus came to find him he had to put his faith in him. How do you think the man's life would have changed? There is another sort of blindness in this story – the people who were questioning him didn't really believe in Jesus, so even though they could see, they were really the ones who were blind.

Act of Worship

Using the bowl of water, invite the children to bless themselves and thank God for their gifts of life and sight.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

In the first reading, in which Samuel anoints David as God's chosen King, and the gospel, where Jesus anoints the blind man with spittle mud, we see the importance of anointing in both the Jewish and the Christian traditions. In general oil is used for this purpose within the Church, and anointing with oil is significant both at baptism and at confirmation particularly at the time of the Easter Vigil. In Jesus' time, blindness and other afflictions were viewed as punishment for sin, for those born blind the sin was assumed to be of the parents. The pool of Siloam was situated inside the city walls of Jerusalem, fed by the spring of Gihon outside the city by way of a tunnel, so in times of siege the city always had a water supply. The blind man's life was transformed step by step in today's gospel. His journey towards faith contrasts his openness to receiving the knowledge of Jesus with the stubborn 'blindness' of the Pharisees who refuse to see or believe the truth of who Jesus is. The progression towards worship that this man travels eventually ends with his persecution, however his life is forever transformed by the encounter with Jesus and his willingness to leave the safety of his affliction for the uncertainty of a life of faith. Being children of the light has nothing to do with physical sight.

Reflection for Leaders

It is hard to believe that damaged people might prefer the security of their familiar afflictions to the opportunity to walk in fullness of health. Yet courage is often needed to respond to Jesus' invitation to wholeness. We can choose, like the Pharisees, to be closed to seeing God work in ways outside our own expectations. Have you had an experience of having your eyes opened, of seeing or coming to understand some new insight? What do you see now that you didn't see before? Has this experience had any impact on your life? As you reflect on areas of 'spiritual blindness', can you identify any blocks to your faith? What signs of God are visible in your life? During this week become aware of bringing light to the people you meet during the week.

Liturgy Outline

Fourth Sunday of Lent

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, we see your goodness in all creation. Help us to live so that others can see the light of Jesus shine through us. Amen

FIRST READING 1 Samuel 16: 1b. 6-7, 10-13a

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Ephesians 5: 1-2, 8-10

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL John 9:1. 6-12, 35-38

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: We know that God loves and cares for us, so we ask that we will find all things working for our good in answer to these prayers:

- That the Church will be a light of justice and hope in our land
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the strength and courage to answer God's call to be good and honest and truthful in all areas of our lives
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For wisdom to see clearly the way that God wants us to live
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we see the good buried deep in each person
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of compassion, hear and answer the prayers your children make to you through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Violet



God is the giver of life and for him, nothing is impossible. In today's Gospel we hear how a good friend of Jesus falls ill and dies. But death is not the end of life, and Jesus uses this event to show people that his is truly the son of God.

Gospel John 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 31-45

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Martha and her sister Mary sent a message to the Lord and told him that his good friend Lazarus was sick. When Jesus heard this, he said, "His sickness won't end in death. It will bring glory to God and his Son." Jesus loved Martha and her sister and brother. But he stayed where he was for two more days. Then he said to his disciples, "Now we'll go back to Judea."

When Jesus got to Bethany, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. When Martha heard that Jesus had arrived, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed in the house. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Yet even now I know that God will do anything you ask." Jesus told her, "Your brother will live again!" Martha answered, "I know that he will be raised to life on the last day, when all the dead are raised."

Jesus then said. "I am the one who raises the dead to life! Everyone who has faith in me will live, even if they die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord!" she replied. "I believe that you are Christ, the Son of God. You are the one we hoped would come in the world."

Many people had come to comfort Mary, and when they saw her quickly leave the house, they thought she was going out to the tomb to cry. So they followed her. Mary went to where Jesus was, then as soon as she saw him, she knelt at his feet

and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw that Mary and the people with her were crying, he was terribly upset and asked, "Where have you put his body?" They replied, "Lord, come and you will see." Jesus started crying, and the people said, "See how much he loved Lazarus."

Jesus was still terribly upset. So he went to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone rolled against the entrance. Then he told the people to roll the stone away. But Martha said, "Lord, you know that Lazarus has been dead four days, and there will be a bad smell." Jesus replied, "Didn't I tell you that if you had faith, you would see the glory of God?"

After the stone had been rolled aside, Jesus looked up toward heaven and prayed, "Father, I thank you for answering my prayer. I know that you always answer my prayers. But I said this so that the people here would believe that you sent me."

When Jesus had finished praying, he shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" The man who had been dead came out, His hands and feet were wrapped with strips of burial cloth, and a cloth covered his face. Jesus then told the people, "Untie him and let him go."

Many of the people who had come to visit Mary saw the things that Jesus did, and they put their faith in him.

The gospel of the Lord.

First Reading Ezekiel 37: 12-14

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

The LORD said to Ezekiel:

Tell the people that I, the LORD God, promise to open their graves and set them free, so they can go home to their land.

When I let them out of their graves, they will know that I the LORD.

My Spirit will give them breath.

They will live again, and I will bring them back home.

Then they will know that I, the LORD God, have kept my promise.

The word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 130

Response: **With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.**

From a sea of troubles, I call out to you, LORD.

Won't you please listen, as I beg for mercy?

With all my heart, I am waiting, LORD, for you! I trust your promises.

God is always merciful, and he has the power to save you.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Violet cloth, Lectionary, a candle, strips of cloth

Images from the Readings

- His good friend was sick
- Do you believe?
- Terribly upset
- You always answer my prayers
- They will live again and I will bring them back home

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Have you ever seen a tadpole become a frog, or a caterpillar change into a butterfly, or something else get a new life? It can be quite amazing. Even though we know that these things happen, it can still be an exciting surprise when it does. Today's reading is like that. It is about resurrection to new life. When their brother died, how would Martha and Mary have felt? Can you remember what we are told about how Jesus felt too? Does it surprise you to think of Jesus having friends and crying when they die?

What did Jesus do before he called Lazarus out of the tomb? (He prayed aloud to God) Why did he do this? (so the people there would believe that God sent him, and God would be glorified)

What is Jesus teaching us with his story? (that we too will have a new life because we believe in him and trust him).

Sometimes it is hard to believe when we haven't seen things for ourselves. If you had been there and seen it, would you have believed more than you did before?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to use the words of Martha to pray as an act of worship: "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God."

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Mary, Martha and Lazarus are sisters and brother, friends of Jesus, living in Bethany close to Jerusalem, just over the Mount of Olives. When Lazarus takes ill, in simple faith his sisters send for Jesus. They are aware of his reputation as a compassionate healer. But Jesus does not respond as expected; he waits until Lazarus is well dead before arriving. Jewish belief was that the soul of the deceased was still present for three days after death, so four days indicates that Lazarus is well past being able to be resuscitated. The onlookers wonder why Jesus had not cured Lazarus before he died. Yet Jesus performs a great wonder- he resurrects Lazarus from the tomb. Some of the witnesses come to greater faith in Jesus, but others are alarmed. The religious leaders of the day are becoming more alarmed by the threat that Jesus poses to them. Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem, his passion and crucifixion, is drawing to its inexorable conclusion. But the call to new life in him becomes stronger. For those without faith, the tomb is a place of decay. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the power of sin and death is broken, and new and eternal life offered to all who believe.

Reflection for Leaders

Of the amazing miracles that Jesus performed during his ministry, this is surely the greatest. It is the one which cemented the enmity of the Jewish leaders against him. It is ironic that by demonstrating that he is the source of life he seals his death sentence. Much of what Jesus reveals of the Kingdom of God is in opposition to worldly values. Often for ourselves also, it is the challenges of life that offer us the most potent growing experiences. Can you think of any 'death' experiences that have led to some sort of transformation or 'new life' for you? Just as strips of burial cloth bound Lazarus, often our experiences of life leave us tied and knotted up. What areas in your life need to be unbound? What aspects of your true self have you buried in the course of your life? How might Jesus help resurrect there? Who are the 'life-giving' people or occasions in your life? Try to be 'life-giving' to others this week with positive affirmation.

Liturgy Outline

Fifth Sunday of Lent

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you are the life of the world. As you life grows in us and changes us, help our faith to grow stronger too. Amen

FIRST READING Ezekiel 37: 12-14
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 130
 With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL John 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 31-45
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: We have heard the words of life. Let us now bring our prayers to God in confidence and trust:

- That the Church will be life giving to all and glorify God
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the strength and courage to openly live and speak our faith in Jesus
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will not bind others up with our own selfishness
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For ourselves, our families and our friends, that we will always care for each other
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God, source of all life, help us to live our lives fully. Bless and protect us and those for whom we pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Passion (Palm) Sunday



Violet

It is recommended that children remain with the whole assembly today

Gospel

Matthew 27:11-54

The PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus was brought before Pilate the governor, who asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

"Those are your words!" Jesus answered. And when the chief priests and leaders brought their charges against him, he did not say a thing.

Pilate asked him "Don't you hear what crimes they say you have done?"

But Jesus did not say anything, and the governor was greatly amazed.

During Passover the governor always freed a prisoner chosen by the people. At that time a well-known terrorist named Jesus Barabbas was in jail. So when the crowd came together, Pilate asked them, "Which prisoner do you want me to set free? Do you want Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" Pilate knew that the leaders had brought Jesus to him because they were jealous.

While Pilate was judging the case, his wife sent him a message. It said, "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man. I have had nightmares because of him."

But the chief priests and the leaders convinced the crowds to ask for Barabbas to be set free and for Jesus to be killed. Pilate asked the crowd again, "Which of these two men do you want me to set free?"

"Barabbas!" they replied.

Pilate asked them, "What am I to do with Jesus, who is called the Messiah?"

They all yelled, "Nail him to a cross!"

Pilate answered, "But what crime has he done?"

"Nail him to a cross!" they yelled even louder.

Pilate saw that there was nothing he could do and that the people were starting to riot. So he took some water and washed his hands in front of them and said, "I won't have anything to do with killing this man. You are the ones doing it!"

Everybody answered, "We and our descendants will take the blame for his death!"

Pilate set Barabbas free. Then he ordered his soldiers to beat Jesus with a whip and nail him to a cross.

The governor's soldiers led Jesus into the fortress and brought together the rest of the troops. They stripped off Jesus' clothes and put a scarlet robe on

him. They made a crown out of thorn branches and placed it on his head, and they put a stick in his right hand. The soldiers knelt down and pretended to worship him. They made fun of him and shouted, "Hey, you king of the Jews!" Then they spit on him. They took the stick from him and beat him on the head with it.

When the soldiers had finished making fun of Jesus, they took off the robe. They put his own clothes back on him and led him off to be nailed to a cross. On the way they met a man from Cyrene named Simon, and they forced him to carry Jesus' cross.

They came to a place named Golgotha, which means "Place of the Skull" There they gave Jesus some wine mixed with a drug to ease the pain. But when Jesus tasted what it was, he refused to drink it.

The soldiers nailed Jesus to a cross and gambled to see who would get his clothes. Then they sat down to guard him. Above his head they put a sign that told why he was nailed there. It said, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." The soldiers also nailed two criminals on crosses one to the right of Jesus and the other to his left.

People who passed by said terrible things about Jesus. They shook their heads and shouted, "So you're the one who claimed you could tear down the temple and build it again in three days! If you are God's Son, save yourself and come down from the cross!"

The chief priests, the leaders, and the teachers of the Law of Moses also made fun of Jesus. They said, "He saved others, but he can't save himself. If he is the king of Israel, he should come down from the cross! Then we will believe him. He trusted God, so let God save him, if he wants to. He even said he was God's Son."

The two criminals also said cruel things to Jesus.

At noon the sky turned dark and stayed that way until three o'clock. Then about that time Jesus shouted, "Eli, Eli, Lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?"

Some of the people standing there heard Jesus and said, "He's calling for Elijah." One of them at once ran and grabbed a sponge. He soaked it in wine, then put it on a stick and held it up to Jesus.

Others said, "Wait! Let's see if Elijah will come and save him." Once again Jesus shouted, and then he died.

At once the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, and rocks split apart. Graves opened, and many of God's people were raised to life. Then after Jesus had risen to life, they came out of their graves and went into the holy city, where many people saw them.

The officer and the soldiers guarding Jesus felt the earthquake and saw everything else that happened. They were frightened and said, "This man really was God's Son!"

The gospel of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Notes

We would encourage children to worship with the whole assembly today – if celebrating separately, allow for a lengthy session. It is a good idea to divide the reading of the Passion into sections so that three or four people can read it. You might enlist the help of two or three older children or adult readers. Do not make a play out of the reading of the Passion.

This is an example of how it might be done: In Year C divide the shorter form of Luke 23: 1-49 (CEV) into sections for reading so that the narration is interesting with changes in reader corresponding to changes of scene or in the pattern of the story. Reader A: 23: 1-4; Reader B: 23:5, Reader C 23:26; Reader D 23:27-31; Reader C 23:32-33; Reader A: 23:44-45; Reader B; 23:47; Reader D: 23:48

Processions are an integral part of the Easter feast and begin today with the procession of palms. They are signs of our willingness to live as pilgrims. Like the Israelites in the desert, we only wander through this earthly life for a time and like Jesus we wander from place to place with the good news. In our processing this week we follow more meaningfully than at any other time of the year in the footsteps of Jesus, from his entry into Jerusalem to his last steps on Calvary and on to the road to Emmaus.

Mediaeval pilgrims who went on pilgrimages to shrines were called 'palmer' because they carried leafy branches from trees as a sign of their religious purpose and zeal.

"The act of walking in procession is an important ritual that promotes active, bodily participation in the liturgy. Processions are essential to Christian worship, walking and singing in procession teaches us in our bones what it means to be human, it makes us human, unites us in an assembly and puts us on the road to the new Jerusalem. Processions are great opportunities to worship God with our bodies as well as our minds, with walking as well as with words." (Liturgy 90 Feb/Mar 94)

A tray of objects related to the readings (e.g. palms, nails, a cross of sticks) may be close at hand as a visual prompt to focus the children on the readings. They can then be used to stimulate discussion.

Suggested Focus

Purple cloth (Lent), Lectionary, a crucifix and palms surrounded by small tea-light candles.

Images from the Readings

- Palms
- King of the Jews
- Beaten with a whip
- Nail him to a cross
- A good man

Discussion Points

Try to emphasise the resurrection – that life succeeds death; that we await the Alleluias of Easter Sunday morning. For now and the next five days, we follow the way of the Cross. Our procession today was the beginning, for the rest of the week we continue our pilgrimage to Easter.

Who was there?

Why did they want Jesus crucified?

What does the story tell us about God and suffering in the world?

Why was Jerusalem so busy at this time? (Passover)

Act of Worship

The procession with palms and percussion instruments will form the major act of worship in today's liturgy (see notes overleaf),

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The Jews had been longing for a great leader, like one of their Kings of old, who would lead them to victory against the Roman invaders. They thought that Jesus might be that leader. At this time of Passover many Jews gathered in Jerusalem to remember how God had saved them from slavery. But by his actions he shows everyone that he is no earthly king or soldier – he comes as the King of peace, love and forgiveness. This is why he chose to enter the city riding on a donkey, commonly used for carrying loads, rather than a battle horse.

Jesus' dying words are used as the Psalm response. It is important at this time to focus on the agony and desolation of the passion, but we also remember the fact of the resurrection, as described by the evangelists and witnesses who viewed it from the perspective of the risen Christ ascending into glory. Paul's letter begins to draw out implications of self-giving love of Jesus, who was obedient even to death, was raised up and glorified by God. Through giving his life he gained life.

Reflection on the readings

Reflect on your feelings as you listened to the Passion being read. What does the passion of Jesus tell us about where God is in the suffering of the world and in our own personal suffering? What does self-giving love imply for the way we live our lives? What does it ask of us personally?

Liturgy Outline

Passion (Palm) Sunday

It is recommended that children remain with the whole assembly today. If there is to be a Children's Liturgy the following outline is provided.

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their
Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim
God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted
to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, we thank you for making us your children. Help us to serve
others, especially those who are close to us. Amen

FIRST READING Isaiah 50: 6-7
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 22
 My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included this week)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL John 20: 1-9
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: With hearts full of hope let us pray to God our creator and redeemer
for all our needs:

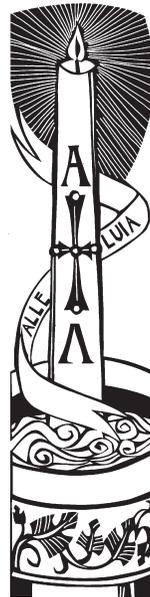
- That the Church be a place that frightened people can shelter in
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we may learn not to give up when things get difficult
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we, the children of Aotearoa-New Zealand, will be an example to
others by the way we care for the poor, the sick and the unpopular
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the gift of caring for others
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God, our strength and hope, you heal the hurting and the broken –
hearted, bless us and those for whom we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord.
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts

Easter Sunday

No material has been given for Easter as it is recommended that Children celebrate with the full community





EASTERTIME

Readings

Second Sunday of Easter

White



When Jesus appeared to his disciples for the first time after his death, one disciple was not with them. He became known as “doubting Thomas,” because he did not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. He told the other disciples that his disbelief would only end if he could see Jesus with his own eyes.

Gospel

John 20:19-29

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

The disciples were afraid of the Jewish leaders, And on the evening of that same Sunday they locked themselves in a room. Suddenly, Jesus appeared in the middle of the group. He greeted them and showed them his hands and his side. When the disciples saw the Lord, they became very happy.

After Jesus had greeted them again, he said, “I am sending you, just as the Father has sent me.” Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, they will be forgiven.” But if you don’t forgive their sins, they will not be forgiven.”

Although Thomas the Twin was one of the twelve disciples, he was not with the others when Jesus appeared to them. So they told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But Thomas said, “First, I must see the nail scars in his hands and touch them with my finger. I must put my hand where the spear went into his side. I won’t believe unless I do this!”

A week later the disciples were together again. This time Thomas was with them. Jesus came in while the doors were still locked and stood in the middle of the group. He greeted his disciples and said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at my hands! Put your hand into my side. Stop doubting and have faith!”

Thomas replied, “You are my Lord and my God!” Jesus said, “Thomas, do you have faith because you have seen me? The people who have faith in me without seeing me are the ones who are really blessed!”

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Acts 2:42-47

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Followers of Jesus spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together. Everyone was amazed at the many miracles and wonders that the apostles Worked.

All the Lord’s followers often met together, And they shared everything they had. They would sell their property and possessions and give the money to whoever needed it. Day after day they met together in the temple. They broke bread together in different homes and shared their food happily and freely, while praising God. Everyone liked them, and each day the Lord added to their group others who were being saved.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 118

Response: **Give thanks, for the Lord is good, God’s love is everlasting.**

Let Israel shout, “God is always merciful!”

Let the family of Aaron the priest shout, :God is always merciful!”

Let every true worshiper of the LORD shout. “God is always merciful!”

The stone that the builders tossed aside has now become the most important stone. The LORD has done this, and is it amazing to us. This day belongs to the LORD! Let’s celebrate and be glad today.

Second Reading

1 Peter 1:3-4

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER

Brothers and sisters:

Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is so good, and by raising Jesus from death,

He has given us new life and a hope that lives on.

God has something stored up for you in heaven, Where it will never decay or be ruined or disappear.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a picture of a hand

Images from the Readings

- Locked in a room, afraid
- Receive the Holy spirit
- My Lord and my God!
- Broke bread and prayed
- New life and hope

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Have you ever been tricked by your friends? Sometimes it can be hard to believe some of the things that people tell you without seeing them for yourself. Thomas thought his friends were tricking him when they said that Jesus, who had died, had visited them when Thomas wasn't there. How do you think Thomas felt when they told him this? Where were the disciples when Jesus appeared to them? (Locked in the upper room)

Why do you think they had been so afraid? (they might face the same fate as Jesus; the authorities thought they had stolen the body from the tomb) How did they feel afterwards (very happy) If the doors were locked how did Jesus get in? (no ordinary person could, but Jesus now had a resurrected body)

What happened when Thomas saw Jesus? Did Thomas believe he was seeing Jesus then? Why was it important for him to touch Jesus?

We have not seen Jesus as Thomas did, but we believe that Jesus is present to us in other people, in prayer, in the Mass and in the Scriptures. What did Jesus say about people who believed in him without seeing him? (they are really blessed) What does this tell us today?

Act of Worship

Thomas' powerful act of faith was: "You are my Lord and my God". Invite the children to repeat this statement and then greet each other with a sign of peace.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Doubt is a common response by many to matters of faith. It must have been so for the disciples dealing with the shock of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Thomas expressed this doubt and placed conditions on his belief. Jesus' response was compassionate and accepting, and led to one of the most profound professions of faith. The move from doubt to faith is one of transformation: the fear of the disciples, locked huddled in their upper room was transformed into peace and even joy by the greeting of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit; the transformation of the doubt of Thomas into faith. This transformation of Thomas occurs when he is given the opportunity to touch Jesus. Along with the transformation comes the responsibility of being sent, just as Jesus was sent, to act as he did. There is an ancient tradition that Thomas went on to preach the gospel as far East as India. The first reading exhorts the early Christians in living their faith with renewed faith and joy, and strengthening them in the face of persecution.

Reflection for Leaders

Touch is a powerful sense. In times of sadness or bereavement a simple touch can often convey more comfort than words. It goes beyond verifying physical presence. It can provide healing and comfort and speaks of support or compassion. Laying on of hands, often within a rite of anointing, is a potent symbol indicating the impartation of the Holy Spirit and is used in many sacraments – for example the Rite of Reconciliation, anointing of the Sick, Confirmation. The disciples in today's reading were transformed by the unexpected presence of Jesus among them. The process of transformation in our own lives often requires the support of others. Are there times when God has acted in a way that is different to what you have expected? Have there been times of doubt in your life experience or your faith journey? How did you overcome these doubts, and how will you nourish your faith in the future? During this week look for ways in which a simple touch might convey unspoken messages of support to others.

Liturgy Outline

Second Sunday of Easter

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, we know your love is everlasting. Help us to see you through the people we meet so that day by day our belief in you grows stronger. Amen

FIRST READING Acts 2:42-47
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 118
 Give thanks for the Lord is good, God's love is everlasting
(Or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* 1 Peter 1:3-4
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL John 20:19-29
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: In the joy of this Easter season, we turn to God in confidence with all our needs:

- That our Church will reach out to all people with fullness of new life
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That all people will know the good news of the new life of Jesus
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That all who are afraid will share the peace of the Risen Christ
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For those who are sick and lonely, that the joy of Easter which we share with them will make them strong
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of new life, you give hope to the hearts of all who are afraid. Hear and answer the prayers that we make for others and ourselves through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

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The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Third Sunday of Easter

White

After the death of Jesus, his disciples were filled with despair and disbelief. Only days before, Jesus had been greeted by the crowds as he entered Jerusalem, and now he lay dead in a tomb.



Gospel

Luke 24:13-35

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

Two of Jesus' disciples were going to the village of Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. As they were talking and thinking about what had happened, Jesus came near and started walking along beside them. But they did not know who he was.

Jesus asked them, "What were you talking about as you walked along?"

The two of them stood there looking sad and gloomy. Then the one named Cleopas asked Jesus, "Are you the only person from Jerusalem who didn't know what was happening there these last few days?"

"What do you mean?" Jesus said

They answered, "Those things that happened to Jesus from Nazareth. By what he did and said he showed that he was a powerful prophet, who pleased God and all the people. Then the chief priests and our leaders had him arrested and sentenced to die on a cross; We had hoped that he would be the one to set Israel free! "But it has already been three days since all this happened. Some women in our group surprised us. They had gone to the tomb early in the morning, but did not find the body of Jesus.

They came back, saying that they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he is alive. Some men from our group went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said. But they didn't see Jesus either."

Then Jesus asked the two disciples, "Why can't you understand? How can you be so slow to believe all that the prophets said? Didn't you know that the Messiah would have to suffer before he was given his glory?"

Jesus then explained everything written about himself in the Scriptures, beginning with the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets. When the two of them came near the village where they were going, Jesus seemed to be going farther.

They begged him. "Stay with us! It's already late, and the sun is going down." So Jesus went into the house to stay with them.

After Jesus sat down to eat, he took some bread. He blessed it and broke it. Then he gave it to them. At one they knew who he was, but he disappeared.

They said to each other, "When he talked with us along the road and explained the Scriptures to us, didn't it warm our hearts?" So they got right up and returned to Jerusalem. The two disciples found the eleven apostles and the others gathered together. And they learned from the group that the Lord was really alive and had appeared to Peter. Then the disciples from Emmaus told what happened on the road and how they knew he was the Lord when he broke the bread.

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Acts 2:14, 22-24

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

On the day of Pentecost, Peter stood with the eleven apostles and spoke in a loud and clear voice to the crowd: "Friends and everyone else living in Jerusalem, listen carefully to what I have to say!

"Now, listen to what I have to say about Jesus from Nazareth. God proved that he sent Jesus to you by having him work miracles, wonders and signs.

All of you know this. "God had already planned and decided that Jesus would be handed over to you. So you took him and had evil men put him to death on a cross.

"But God set him free from death and raised him to life. Death would not hold him in its power."

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 18

Response: **I love you, Lord, my strength**

I love you, LORD God, and you make me strong.

You are my mighty rock, my fortress, my protector, the rock where I am safe, my shield, my powerful weapon, and my place of shelter.

You are the living LORD! I will praise you.

You are a mighty rock. I will honor you for keeping me safe.

You give glorious victories to your chosen king.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, lectionary, candle, cross with a pathway of stones from it.

Images from the Readings

- Talking and thinking
- Why can't you understand?
- Didn't it warm our hearts?
- They knew he was the Lord
- Death could not hold him

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

If something awful happened to one of your friends, would you want to get away from it? When Jesus was put to death, some of his friends left Jerusalem and went away to a place called Emmaus. How do you think they were feeling? (Confused, disappointed) When Jesus came up besides them and started talking to them they didn't recognise him. Why do you think that was?

How did they eventually realise that it was Jesus talking to them? (they got really excited when he was explaining Scripture to them and then when he shared a meal with them it was just like the Last Supper)

Sometimes it is hard to understand Jesus, and it took these disciples [who knew him well] a long time to understand that what they expected to happen was not the way that God had planned things. Do you sometimes find Jesus hard to understand and hard to believe?

What do you find most difficult?

Does it help to talk to people about these things?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to think of something that made them feel very disappointed.

Then think quietly about the things that helped them to feel better again.

Pray: Jesus, when we are disappointed help us to feel our hearts burn with your love for us.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The abject disappointment of the disciples following the death of Jesus is reflected in the response of these two disciples were left Jerusalem to return to the Emmaus. The exact site of this town is not known, but the journey afforded an opportunity for these disciples to talk and reflect on what had happened. Being able to discuss events with the unrecognised Jesus opened the disciples to the explanation of the Scriptures (Liturgy of the Word) and the sharing of a meal (Liturgy of the Eucharist) – essentially the pattern of Mass, as we know it today. At Emmaus, just like the Last Supper, it is in the action of breaking the bread, that Jesus is revealed to the disciples – we use the same action at Mass today. The priest takes bread, blesses it, breaks it and we share it with each other. Understanding this story helps us to understand more fully what happens at mass – we become informed by the Scriptures and nourished by Holy Communion.

Reflection for Leaders

When studying the Emmaus story during this week, try to identify the areas of opposition, which are employed in the telling, e.g. the disciples leaving Jerusalem dejectedly at the beginning of that story, and rushing to return to Jerusalem with joy at the end. There polarities frame the two actions of Jesus that are the essence of our experience of the Mass. As you reflect on your own journey of faith, have you ever feared that being a follower of Jesus will demand more from you than you are able to bear? Have you ever been tempted to turn your back and walk away? Just as the two disciples in their dejection found Jesus walking alongside them, have you ever had a sense of Jesus walking alongside you in your low moments? The disciples recognised that their hearts were burning within them as Jesus broke open the Scriptures to them. Have you ever had an experience of this personal response to Scripture? What might make Jesus' presence more real for you and help you stay committed to your Christian journey? During this week look for opportunities to share your own Good News experience with someone.

Liturgy Outline

Third Sunday of Easter

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, we want to draw close to you because you are our strength.
Help us to understand and believe. Amen

FIRST READING Acts 2:14, 22-24
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 18
 I love you, Lord, my strength
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Luke 24:13-35
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: As we journey together during this Easter season, let us be open to God's love and grace for all our needs:

- That our Church will always be a place of welcome and hospitality to those who are feeling dejected or unsure of their faith
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a renewed sense of Jesus' presence in the Word, the breaking of the bread, the gathering of the people and the person of our Priest
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That our faith will grow strong and vibrant
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For God's peace to comfort those who have lost loved ones and those who are sick
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God, who walks alongside us when we are fearful or disappointed, hear and answer our prayers that we bring to you through Jesus your Son
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Fourth Sunday of Easter

White

A shepherd's lonely job was to find food for his sheep and to protect them from wild animals. Today we hear how Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd.



Gospel

John 10:1-10

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Jesus said to his disciples: "I tell you for certain that only thieves and robbers climb over the fence instead of going in through the gate to the sheep pen. But the gatekeeper opens the gate for the shepherd, and he goes in through it. The sheep know their shepherd's voice. He calls each of them by name and leads them out. "When he has led out all of his sheep, he walks in front of them, and they follow, because they know his voice. The sheep will not follow strangers. They don't recognize a stranger's voice, and they run away." Jesus told the people this story. But they did not understand what he was talking about.

Then Jesus said: "I tell you for certain that I am the gate for the sheep. Everyone who came before me was a thief or a robber, and the sheep did not listen to any of them. I am the gate. All who come in through me will be saved. Through me they will come and go and find pasture.

"A thief comes only to rob, kill, and destroy. I came so that everyone would have life, and have it in its fullest."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

On the day of Pentecost, Peter stood with the eleven apostles and spoke in a loud clear voice to the crowd: "Everyone in Israel should know for certain that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ, even though you put him to death on a cross." When the people heard this, they were very upset. They asked Peter and the other apostles, "Friends, what shall we do?" Peter said, "Turn back to God! Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will be given the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children. It is for everyone our Lord God will choose, no matter where they live."

Peter told the people many other things as well. Then he said, "I beg you to save yourselves from what will happen to all these evil people."

On that day about three thousand believed his message and were baptized.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 23

Response: **The Lord is my shepherd; There is nothing I shall want**

You, LORD, are my shepherd. I will never be in need.

You let me rest in fields of green grass.

You lead me to streams of peaceful water, and you refresh my life.

You are true to your name, and you lead me along the right paths.

I may walk through valleys as dark as death, but I won't be afraid,

You are with me, and your shepherd's rod makes me feel safe.

Your kindness and love will always be with me

Each day of my life, and I will live forever in your house, LORD.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle, an image of Jesus the Good Shepherd

Images from the Readings

- He calls each by name
- They follow because they know his voice
- Find pasture
- Life in its fullest
- Given the Holy Spirit

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Have you ever heard someone's voice and recognised that it belongs to someone you know?

Can you think of a time when you needed to ask your Mum or Dad a question and even before you asked them you knew exactly what they would say?

Why do you think Jesus talks of shepherds and sheep? (in his day, a shepherd cared for a group of sheep and he knew each one by name. He looked after them, protected them from dangers, took them to where there was grass to eat and water to drink. He would talk to his sheep and even sleep with them so that no wild animals could attack them in the night; the sheep knew that their shepherd kept them safe so they trusted him. Jesus chose this image to show his great love, because he gives life to us just as the shepherd does for his sheep)

What do you think Jesus is trying to teach us with this story today? (like the sheep we can hear and recognise God's voice.)

How can we do this? (by listening to our parents, teachers etc)

What does Jesus tell us he really wants for us? (To live full and happy lives)

Act of Worship

Sing one of the 'Shepherd' songs that the children might know such as "The Lord is my Shepherd" AOV 1/26 or similar

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The concept of the shepherd in ancient times is one of intimate and trusting relationship which forms the basis of our terms 'pastor' and 'pastoral care' It is a traditional image the Jewish people had long held as an image of their own relationship with God. The image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is well known and well loved because of the individual care that is symbolised for each one of the flocks. But John takes the imagery a step further by the introduction of the gate. Valid entry into the flock of God's people can only be made by way of the gate, which is belief in Christ. Jesus states that no other entry is acknowledged or permitted. John's gospel uses a different literary technique from the synoptic gospels. He does not utilise the parables as they do. However this gospel uses the imagery of the Good Shepherd to great effect as it contrasts the shepherd who brings the sheep in by the gate with the robbers who climb over the fence. John is reflecting on pastoral leadership. A good leader will always come through Jesus, the gate, or the people will be scattered and confused. Abundant life is available to those who follow Jesus' leadership.

Reflection for Leaders

No image of God gives us a complete picture, but each offers a valuable insight into God and our relationship with God. We understand that Jesus is the fulfilment of the Hebrew Scriptures, and the potency of the image of Jesus the Good Shepherd gives many a deep sense of comfort and security. What particular images of Jesus have you found most helpful to you in your faith journey? As we travel our journey of faith, many people will have guided us and protected us. Can you recall the special people in your life, the attributes that they had and how they used their gifts to care for you and others? Jesus assures us that as his followers we will have life to its fullest, and for many in our society today this is a vain hope. How would you describe 'life in its fullest' to someone?

During the coming week seek our opportunities to protect or shepherd someone who might be feeling a bit lost or helpless.

Liturgy Outline

Fourth Sunday of Easter

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 blessed be God

Leader: O God, you protect us with great love and care. Help us always to turn to you with trust whenever we need help Amen

FIRST READING Acts 2:14a, 36-41
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 23
 The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want
(Or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL John 10:1-10
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: With trust in God's love and protection we call upon God for all our wants:

- That our Church will be a place of safety that cares for all
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For peace and security in our homes, our schools and our community and throughout the world
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the gift of compassion to care for the sick and the helpless around us
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For all those who are like lost sheep
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of new life, you give hope to the hearts of all who are afraid. Hear and answer the prayers that we make for ourselves and others through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Fifth Sunday of Easter

White

Few of us would set off on a journey to a place we had not been to before without a map or some guide to take with us. Nobody would set off with no idea of how to get there, for then we would certainly get lost! Today Jesus tells his disciples that they already know the way to the place he is going, even though they have never been there before. We will see how confused they became and how Jesus explained all that they needed to know!



Gospel

John 14:1-12

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Jesus said to his disciples, "Don't be worried! Have faith in God and have faith in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house. I wouldn't tell you this, unless it was true. I am going there to prepare a place for each of you. After I have done this, I will come back and take you with me. Then we will be together. You know the way to where I am going."

Thomas said, "Lord, we don't even know where you are going! How can we know the way?"

"I am the way, the truth, and the life!" Jesus answered. "Without me, no one can go to the Father. If you had known me, you would have known the Father. But from now on, you do know him, and you have seen him."

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father. That is all we need."

Jesus replied: "Philip, I have been with you for a long time. Don't you know who I am? If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. How can you ask me to show you the Father? Don't you believe that I am one with the Father and that the Father is one with me? What I say is not said on my own. The Father who lives in me does these things. "Have faith in me when I say that the Father is one with me and that I am one with the Father. Or else have faith in me simply because of the things I do.

"I tell you for certain that if you have faith in me, you will do the same things that I am doing. You will do even greater things, Now that I am going back to the Father."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Acts 6:1-7a

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

A lot of people were becoming followers of the Lord. But some of the ones who spoke Greek started complaining about the ones who spoke Aramaic. They complained that the Greek-speaking widows were not given their share when the food supplies were handed out each day.

The twelve apostles called the whole group of followers together and said, "We should not give up preaching God's message in order to serve at tables.

My friends, choose seven men who are respected and wise and filled with God's Spirit. We will put them in charge of these things. We can spend our time praying and serving God by preaching."

This suggestion pleased everyone, and they began by choosing Stephen. He had great faith and was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Then they chose Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and also Nicolaus, who worshiped with the Jewish people in Antioch. These men were brought to the apostles. Then the apostles prayed and placed their hands on the men to show that they had been chosen to do this work. God's message spread, and many more people in Jerusalem became followers.

The word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 145

Response: **You open your hand to feed us, Lord;
You answer all our needs**

All creation will thank you, and your loyal people will praise you. They will tell about your marvellous kingdom and your power.

Everyone depends on you and when the time is right,
You provide them with food.

By your own hand you satisfy the desires of all who live.

Our LORD, everything you do is kind and thoughtful,
And you are near to everyone whose prayers are sincere.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a map

Images from the Readings

- A place for you
- The way, the truth and the life!
- I am one with the Father
- Sharing food each day
- Chosen to do the work

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Has anyone ever told you that you look like your Mum or your Dad, or that there is a 'family likeness' with the people in your family? Jesus tells us today that we don't need to wonder what God is like any more – anyone who knows him also knows God because Jesus is just like his Father. Jesus came to show us how much God loves us. How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus told them he was going away?

What do you think Jesus meant when he said he was going to his Father's house? (Heaven)

What was Jesus planning to do in heaven? (Prepare a place for his friends)

If you weren't quite sure how to get to some place you wanted to go to, what might you use to help show you the way? (a map) People asked Jesus if he could tell them the way to live with God in heaven. He told them to follow his way of life. Jesus has shown us how to live. Jesus' way of life is our map!

What are some of the ways that Jesus has shown us to live?

How do you think that we can follow Jesus today?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to choose a person to pray for today, and allow them a few moments of silence to pray especially for them, Finish by praying "Jesus, we trust in you."

Background to the Readings for Leaders

This is a time of transition for the followers of Jesus and today's gospel depicts Jesus giving final instructions to his friends. Jesus is preparing his friends for the time that he will no longer be with them. Once he has gone, they will be expected to carry on the responsibility of continuing the work that he leaves. Their fear and uncertainty is echoed in the confused questions that they ask him. But Jesus soothes their fears and explains that he is both the map and the destination. When they adopt the life style of Jesus, this intimacy with God and his relationships with people and creation (Atua, tangata, whenua) they will be living the life of faith that God calls each of us to. Living God's way will empower them to not only continue the work of Jesus but to do even greater things. However there is an implied warning in the first reading about the cost of dissension within the Church – once issues have been satisfactorily resolved the opportunity for growth is restored.

Reflection for Leaders

Jesus understands how lost his friends will feel when he leaves them, and spends some time reassuring them that he was preparing a place for them to join him. What are the special places for you? Do you have a particular place where you find it easiest to experience the presence of God in your life? The different rooms of the Father's house are reflected in the various works of the Church. Is everyone in your parish community encouraged to participate and welcomed? How might you go about improving these things? Jesus' instructions were for his friends of that day, but they are just as relevant for us today and the outcome is also true – Jesus empowers us to do great things in service. Are there great things that you are being called to perform? Do you have a sense of being specially chosen to do this work? Mostly we do not see the outcomes of the service that we give, but always the fruit of the choices we make in how we live our lives become apparent to all, In what ways does living a life of faith get tested each day? Spend time during the week actively looking to Jesus to allay any fears that you have about the future. Then look for ways of sharing hospitality to a lonely person

Liturgy Outline

Fifth Sunday of Easter

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you are always fair and good. Teach us your ways so that we may know you better and grow more like you each day. Amen

FIRST READING Acts 6:1-7a
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 145
 You open your hand to feed us, Lord; you answer all our needs.
(Or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL John 14:1-12
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Placing our trust in the great love that God has for us, let us bring our prayers to the Father of Jesus:

- That our Church will always be a faithful signpost showing us the ways of God
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the spirit of tolerance and acceptance between all members of our parish, our school and our families
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For wisdom in all those who are leaders
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That those who don't have enough food will find help and support from generous people
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

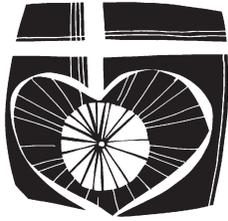
Leader: God who calls us to new life, listen to the prayers we bring to you through Jesus Christ our Lord
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Sixth Sunday of Easter

White



Jesus knew that he was soon to be leaving his disciples and going back to the Father. He promises to send a special helper – the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells his disciples about this precious gift. Through the Holy Spirit Jesus was able to remain with the apostles then and he remains with us in the same way today. When do we receive the Holy Spirit in a special way? At our baptism and confirmation. If you were asked to describe the Spirit what would you say?

Gospel

John 14:15-21

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Jesus said to his disciples: “if you love me, you will do as I command. Then I will ask the Father to send you the Holy Spirit who will help you and always be with you. The Spirit will show you what is true.

“The people of this world cannot accept the Spirit, because they don’t see or know him. But you know the Spirit, who is with you and will keep on living in you.

“I won’t leave you like orphans. I will come back to you. In a little while the people of this world won’t be able to see me, but you will see me. And because I live, you will live. Then you will know that I am one with the Father. You will know that you are one with me, and I am one with you.

“If you love me, you will do what I have said, and my Father will love you. I will also love you and show you what I am like.”

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Philip went to the town of Samaria and told the people about Christ. They crowded around Philip because they were eager to hear what he was saying and to see him work miracles. Many people with evil spirits were healed, and the spirits went out of them with a shout. A lot of crippled and lame people were also healed. Everyone in that city was very glad because of what was happening.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that some people in Samaria had accepted God’s message, they sent Peter and John. When the two apostles arrived, they prayed that the people would be given the Holy Spirit.

Before this the Holy Spirit had not been given to anyone in Samaria though some of them had been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Peter and John then placed their hands on everyone who had faith in the Lord, and they were given the Holy Spirit.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 66

Response: **Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.**

Tell everyone on this earth to shout praises to God!
Sing about his glorious name. Honour him with praises.
Say to God, “Everything you do is fearsome!”

“You are worshipped by everyone! We all sing praises to you.”
Come and see the fearsome things our God has done!

All who worship God, come here and listen;
I will tell you everything God has done for me.
Let’s praise God!
He listened when I prayed, and he is always kind.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a paper windmill or a balloon as a symbol of the Holy Spirit

Images from the Readings

- If you love me
- People of the world cannot know the Holy Spirit
- I won't leave you
- I am one with the Father
- Many were healed

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Have you ever been left alone for a long time?

What does it feel like when people go away and leave you behind? Who minds you when this happens?

When Jesus was getting ready to go back to his father, he knew that his friends would be feeling 'left behind', so he promised to send a special helper to be with them. Who was this helper?

(The Holy Spirit) The Holy Spirit is the same Spirit that was in Jesus, which made him strong and brave and helped him treat everyone with respect and love. This Spirit is inside us as well.

How did we receive this Spirit? (at our baptism, confirmation)

Can we see the Holy Spirit? The Spirit of God is a bit like the wind. We can't see it, but we can see the action of the wind, like when we blow this windmill or blow out a candle flame. Sometimes the wind can be very gentle, and other times it can be strong and powerful.

So too we can see the Holy Spirit in action in the people around us. Can you think of any ways that we might recognise the Holy Spirit in people?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to join in this prayer:

Come Holy Spirit, and breathe your life into us, so that we may touch the world with your love just as Jesus showed us. Amen

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Persecution following the stoning of Stephen caused the spread of the gospel outside Jerusalem as the Greek-speaking disciples fled. The first reading presents us with a scene of great welcome by the Samaritans as Philip brings the gospel message to them accompanied by miraculous signs of healing. The Easter joy is prevalent as people received the fullness of the impartation of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promises the giving of the Holy Spirit in the gospel reading as he tenderly assures his closest friends that they would not be left uncared for like orphans. It is the same Spirit that infuses Jesus' own personality. Descriptions of the Holy Spirit give us an insight into the role that she plays in us individually and in the church as a whole – **Advocate**: one who takes up a cause on behalf of another, gives aid and support; **Paraclete** – someone 'called to the side' of another; Comforter, Counsellor. God's heart is always tender towards the marginalized, the poor, the orphans and widows. As followers of Jesus we need never feel abandoned by God because the presence of the Holy Spirit is always with us, freely given at our baptism and confirmation. Through it we are enabled to love God and keep his commands.

Reflection for Leaders

Obedience is a benchmark of love. Profession of loving God may be easy, but being obedient to Jesus' commands takes us to a new level of commitment in our Christian walk. These can be summed up by the command to love God and each other. This might sound easy, but when we are asked to love people who provoke or ridicule us we need to call on the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. What are the key commandments for you, and how do you live them? The Holy Spirit is not only with us, but within us, as a source of inner strength and empowerment – the same Spirit at work in the life of Jesus, freely given to us at our baptism and confirmation. Through this presence Jesus remains forever present to the church, and through it we share in the life of God and mission of Jesus. During the week watch for moments which you consider to be experiences of the Holy Spirit, in your own personal prayer, in your relationships and in the church and its liturgy.

Liturgy Outline

Sixth Sunday of Easter

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

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PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you sent your Holy Spirit to breathe your life into us. Help us to touch the lives of others with the love and strength that you give to us. Amen

FIRST READING Acts 8:5-8, 14-17
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 66
 Let all the earth cry out to God with joy
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL John 14:15-21
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: We have listened to God's word. Now let us bring all our prayers and our needs to our loving God:

- That our Church be led by the Holy Spirit in all things
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we always treat others with respect and dignity
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For courage in helping others who have been treated unfairly and need us to stick up for them
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For all those who are rejected, lonely, abandoned
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of comfort, you always hear the prayers of your children. Knowing your great love for us we make these prayers now through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

The Ascension of the Lord

White

Has someone you cared about ever gone away and left you? How did it feel? Jesus was returning to his Father and he knew that his friends would be feeling really lost when he went. But he had finished the work that he was to do. Now it was time to leave the disciples with some work to do. What was that work? Who does this work today?



Gospel

Matthew 28:16-20

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus' eleven disciples went to a mountain in Galilee, where Jesus had told them to meet him. They saw him and worshipped him, but some of them doubted. Jesus came to them and said: "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth! Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you. "I will be with you always, even until the end of the world."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Acts 1:8-11

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Jesus told his disciples:

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you and give you power. Then you will tell everyone about me in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and everywhere in the world."

After Jesus had said this and while they were watching he was taken up into a cloud. They could not see him, but as he went up, they kept looking up into the sky.

Suddenly two men dressed in white clothes were standing there beside them. They said, "Why are you men from Galilee standing here and looking up into the sky? Jesus has been taken to heaven. But he will come back in the same way that you have seen him go."

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 47

Response: **God mounts the throne to shouts of joy.**

All of you nations, clap your hands and shout joyful praises to God. The Lord Most High is fearsome, the ruler of all the earth.

God goes up to his throne, as people shout and trumpets blast. Sing praises to God our King.

God is ruler of all the earth! Praise God with songs. God rules the nations from his sacred throne.

Second Reading

Ephesians 1:17-21

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

Brothers and sisters: I ask the glorious Father and God of our Lord Jesus Christ to give you his Spirit. The Spirit will make you wise and let you understand what it means to know God.

My prayer is that light will flood your hearts and that you will understand the hope that was given to you when God chose you. Then you will discover the glorious blessings that will be yours together with all of God's people.

I want you to know about the great and mighty power that God has for us followers. It is the same wonderful power he used when he raised Christ from death and let him sit at his right side in heaven. There Christ rules over all forces, authorities, powers, and rulers. He rules over all beings in this world and will rule in the future world as well.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle

Images from the Readings

- They worshipped and some doubted
- God to the people of all nations
- I will be with you always
- The Holy Spirit will give you power
- He will come back in the same way

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Have you ever gone to the airport to farewell someone who was going overseas? Who were you saying goodbye to?

What sort of things do people say before they go on a long journey? In today's story we hear about Jesus saying farewell to his friends as he goes back to his Father. But he tells us that he will come back, and we will not be alone.

Jesus leaves a special job for his friends to do. Have you ever been sent to do a special job for someone?

Jesus sends his friends out to the ends of the earth. What were they being sent to do? Did they do it?

What did Jesus' friends do next? Do you think they missed Jesus? Who are Jesus' friends now? What does Jesus want us to do? Can children really do what Jesus was asking?

Jesus told his friends that he would always be with them. Has Jesus kept his promise? How is Jesus with us today?

Act of Worship

Teach the children an echo creed (may be chanted) as they repeat:

Jesus rose from the dead. Alleluia

Jesus ascended into heaven. Alleluia

Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. Alleluia

Jesus will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. Alleluia

The kingdom of Jesus will have no end. Alleluia

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Jesus has been working, living and praying with his disciples, showing them a way of life and the principles of the Kingdom of God. In today's gospel, Jesus calls his disciples to a mountain in Galilee. Mountaintops are significant in Matthew's gospel – the temptation, the transfiguration, the 'sermon on the mount' all take place on mountains. Matthew draws parallels with Moses who received the old Law on Mt Sinai. Jesus is shown to fulfil and extend the old Law, and extend the reach from the chosen people of Israel to all the people of the world. Jesus commissions the disciples to continue his work in the world. No longer is salvation the sole prerogative of the circumcised whose faith in YHWH, now baptism is extended to all in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit. He sends them out despite the fact that they are still uncertain about what was happening. The word 'apostle' comes from the Greek for 'one who is sent out'. Change is a constant in life for the disciples as well as for us; but Jesus' final words to them bring comfort to them and to all who are serious believers in times of doubt or difficulty. The story of the early church is continued in the first reading, the beginning of the book of Acts. The disciples are further reassured by the words of hope that complete the scene.

Reflection for Leaders

Jesus has conquered death and now passes the baton on to us to continue the mission of the church to carry on the work of Jesus. As you reflect on this gospel, underline the words and phrases that stand out for you. In what way does it speak to your experience of life? How do you respond to Jesus' command to be a witness to him? Jesus tells his disciples that he will be with them until the end of the world. How do you experience God's presence in your life today? Just as the disciples have been sent by Jesus, so too we are sent at the end of each Mass with the words, "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord" Most of us don't have a mission to go to the ends of the earth. Our mission field is the place where we are, with those whom we come in contact with in our day to day life. Be aware this week of the practical ways that you can witness to Christ in your life – by your hospitality, your treatment of others, your response to their needs, the way you share your faith, your joy.

Liturgy Outline

Ascension of the Lord

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

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PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you tell us that you are with us always and we need never be afraid. Help us to do your work in the world until you send Jesus back to us in glory. Amen

FIRST READING Acts 1:8-11
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 47
 God mounts the throne to shouts of joy
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Ephesians 1:17-21
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 28:16-20
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: On this day when Jesus was lifted up from our midst, let us stand before his Father in prayer:

- That God will give wisdom and insight to those who lead the Church into this new time in our history
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will always share the wonderful things that God has done for us with those we meet
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For those who are suffering, that God will empower them
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For all those who feel afraid of the future, that God will give them strength and comfort
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God most holy, we ask you to hear our prayers as we wait for Jesus to return in glory. We come to you with our needs through Jesus Christ our Lord who has ascended to your right hand
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Pentecost Sunday

Red



Today is a special feast for the Church. It is called 'Pentecost' which the Jews celebrated fifty days after their Passover. This is the feast where Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to his disciples in a special way just as he had promised to do. How was the Holy Spirit to help the disciples? When was the Holy Spirit given to you? Pentecost is called the birthday of the Church. Can you think why this is so?

Gospel

John 20:19-24

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

The disciples were afraid of the Jewish leaders, and on the evening of that same Sunday they locked themselves in a room. Suddenly, Jesus appeared in the middle of the group. He greeted them and showed them his hands and his side. When the disciples saw the Lord, they became very happy.

After Jesus had greeted them again, he said, "I am sending you, just as the Father has sent me."

Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they will be forgiven. But if you don't forgive their sins, they will not be forgiven."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Acts 2:1-11

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

On the day of Pentecost all the Lord's followers were together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from heaven like the sound of a mighty wind! It filled the house where they were meeting. Then they saw what looked like fiery tongues moving in all directions, and a tongue came and settled on each person there. The Holy Spirit took control of everyone, and they began speaking whatever languages the Spirit let them speak.

Many religious Jews from every country in the world were living in Jerusalem. And when they heard this noise, a crowd gathered. But they were surprised, because they were hearing everything in their own language. They were excited and amazed, and said: "Don't all these who are speaking come from Galilee? Then why do we each hear them speaking our very own languages? Some of us are from Parthia, Media, and Elam. Others are from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Lybya near Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia. Some of us were born Jews, and others of us have chosen to be Jews. Yet we all hear them using our own languages to tell the wonderful things God has done."

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 104

Response: **Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.**

I praise you, Lord God, with all my heart. You are glorious and majestic. Our Lord, by your wisdom you made so many things; the whole earth is covered with your living creatures.

You created all of them by your Spirit, and you give new life to the earth. Our Lord, we pray that your glory will last forever and that you will be pleased with what you have done.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 12-13

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brothers and sisters: There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but they all come from the same Spirit. There are different ways to serve the same Lord, and we can each do different things. Yet the same God works in all of us and helps us in everything we do. The Spirit has given each of us a special way of serving others.

The body of Christ has many different parts, just as any other body does. Some of us are Jews, and others are Gentiles. Some of us are slaves, and others are free. But God's Spirit baptised each of us and made us part of the body of Christ. Now we each drink from that same Spirit.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Red cloth, Lectionary, seven red candles on a tray or in a menorah

Images from the Readings

- Locked in a room, afraid
- Jesus breathed on them
- Sound of a mighty wind
- Holy Spirit took control of everyone
- Different ways to serve

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

How do you suppose the disciples were feeling on this day of Pentecost when they were locked in a room? How did they feel when Jesus suddenly appeared among them? What did Jesus want them to do?

This is the same message we heard a little while ago. How did Jesus give the Holy Spirit to the disciples? (he breathed on them) Why do you think he did this? (We need breath to live; wind, or the breath of God, is one of the images of the Holy Spirit) Can you think of any other images of the Holy Spirit? (Flame, dove, wind...) what do you think these tell us about the Holy Spirit?

How do we receive the Holy Spirit today? (in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation)

What does the Holy Spirit do in us, or allow us to do? (Speak of the empowering and enlivening of our lives and faith, the gifts of the Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and the fear of the Lord) and the fruit of the Spirit Gal 5:22)

Why does Jesus talk to his friends about forgiveness?

What do you think Jesus wants us to do?

Act of Worship

Sing a simple "Spirit" song, like "Holy Spirit come".

When rejoining the assembly, process the children in with the menorah or the tray of seven candles and place before the altar

(NB check this out with the priest beforehand)

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Pentecost was a Jewish feast day celebrated fifty days after Passover. This is why so many were in Jerusalem at the time that the Holy Spirit was manifested in the lives of the disciples. It might be expected that the absence of Jesus would have relegated the newly formed gathering of believers to collapse and dissipate, and we know from Scripture that at least some of them had left Jerusalem to return to their homes. But despite their anxiety and sense of having been left behind, a group of about one hundred and twenty believers had gathered to pray in the upper room together. Jesus appears among them offering his greeting of peace and the opportunity to confirm his presence by examining his wounds. The conferring of the Holy Spirit is as intimate as a hongi, as Jesus breathes life back into his fearful disciples. The effect of this gentle action is nevertheless powerful, and in fact reverses the story of the tower of Babel from Hebrew Scriptures, when the languages of people were confused. Filled with courage and fervour the disciples are to go out and continue Jesus' work of forgiveness, judgement, and witness in the world. The Spirit will not teach them new things, but will lead them deeper into the mystery of Jesus and help them to understand the things to come as they take up the challenges that lie ahead.

Reflection for Leaders

Coming to faith is a journey for most of us as we discover God's existence within the realities of our life experiences. This happens mainly through prayer and reflection. Just as the disciples gathered together to pray when they were anxious, so it is important for us to gather with our faith community to share the highs and the lows of our journey. Regular time to pray alone, to pray in community and time to reflect will pay dividends for us. Fear had caused the believers to lock themselves away. Can you recall a time when you have felt 'closed in' with a problem? What helped to free you from this? When Jesus appeared and breathed the Holy Spirit into his friends, this experience was totally life changing for them. Have you ever had an experience that was totally life changing for you? How do you use the Spiritual gifts you have been given in service of others? What fruit of the Spirit are manifest most in those closest to you? This week work on those that are most neglected in yourself.

Liturgy Outline

Pentecost Sunday

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you give us the gift of your Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with your love. Help us to bring Jesus to those who do not know him, and share this love with them, Amen.

FIRST READING Acts 2:1-11
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 104
 Lord , send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Corinthians 12:4-7, 12-13
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL John 20:19-24
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas).

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: God you gave us the gift of your Spirit. Kindly watch over us your children, and those for whom we pray:

- That the Spirit of God will fill and set fire to the Church and all who work to spread the Gospel of Jesus
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the fruit of the Spirit is seen at work in us, in the ordinariness of our daily lives – love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self control
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For peace in our families, our school rooms, our communities
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For all who are alone and hopeless, the sick and those who are hurting, that they will be comforted and empowered
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of hope and healing, we know that you care for us and we bring our prayers to you in confidence through Jesus Christ our Lord
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Trinity Sunday

White

We have many different ways of relating to the people we know. In our family we might be a son or a daughter, a niece or a nephew, a brother or a sister. We might be a friend, a cousin, a grandson or granddaughter. Sometimes we might even be an aunt or an uncle. We might have more than one relationship with someone else. In the same way, the depth of God's relationship with us is indicated by the three persons of the Holy Trinity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



Gospel

John 3:16-17

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Jesus told Nicodemus:

“God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never die. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn its people. He sent him to save them!”

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF EXODUS

Moses did exactly what the Lord had told him. He got up early and carried the two stone tablets up the side of Mount Sinai.

The Lord came down in a cloud and stood beside Moses. Then he said, “I am the Lord.”

He also walked up and down in front of Moses and said, “I am the Lord God, and I am kind and merciful. I don't easily lose my temper, and my love can be trusted.”

Moses quickly bowed low. He worshipped and said, “Lord, if you are pleased with me, then don't leave your people. We are stubborn. But I beg you to forgive our terrible sins and let us be your very own people.”

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Daniel 3

Response:

Glory and praise forever!

Lord God of our ancestors, you are worthy of praise, the highest praise forever. Your glorious and holy name is also worthy of praise, the highest praise forever.

You are glorious and holy, worthy of praise in your temple, the highest praise forever. You are worthy of praise in the heavens, honoured with hymns forever.

Second Reading

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

A READING FROM THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO CORINTHIANS

Good-bye, my friends. Do better and pay attention to what I have said. Try to get along and live peacefully with each other.

Now I pray that God, who gives love and peace, will be with you. Give each other a warm greeting. All of God's people send their greetings.

I pray that the Lord Jesus Christ will bless you and be kind to you! May God bless you with his love, and may the Holy Spirit join all your hearts together.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, three candles, a bowl of holy water and an icon of the Trinity

Images from the Readings

- God loved us so much he gave his only Son
- Not to condemn the people but to save them
- Kind and merciful
- Love that can be trusted
- Unity in the Holy Spirit

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Do you know what this icon represents? (The holy trinity) Trinity is a word that means 'made up of three', and today we celebrate a feast day that honours our understanding of our one God in three persons. Can you name the three persons that make up the Trinity? (the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit)

Today's gospel Jesus explains to a man called Nicodemus that out of his great love for the world God had given him to us. Can you remember what Jesus was sent into the world to do? (to save the people, not to condemn anyone)

Last week we celebrated another feast day called Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples as Jesus returned to his Father. Can you think of any special prayers that we say when all these three persons are referred to? What is the simple one that we say as we come into the church and bless ourselves with the holy water? (sign of the cross. Other prayers include the Glory Be, the Creed, the signing with three little crosses of the forehead, the lips and heart before the gospel is proclaimed)

Act of Worship

Using the bowl of holy water let the children come and dip their hands in as they reverently bless themselves with the sign of the cross: 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' Amen'

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Each of these short readings once again gives us an insight into the mystery of God. In the first, God reveals to Moses the attributes of kindness, mercy, patience and trustworthiness as Moses appeals to his forgiveness on behalf of the people with whom God enters into an intimate relationship. The second reading explores the warmth of the fruit of the Spirit that smooths our relationships together. The gospel completes the picture as it very simply speaks of God's great immeasurable love and the saving action of Jesus. John writes from the premise that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that this belief would ensure eternal life for his readers. The intimacy of the relationship between the Father and the Son, so that in knowing the Son, one comes to know the Father. From the earliest times the Church has pondered the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Doctrine of the Trinity, three persons in one God, is the result of this. Theologians today continue to contemplate the mystery of the Trinity, which is central to the faith and life of Christians. An image of the Trinity can be understood as the Lover (Father), the Loved (Son) and the Love between (Spirit). Traditionally St Patrick was purported to use the shamrock in an attempt to explain the Trinity as God who is three in one. Another commonly recognised symbol is the triangle.

Reflection for Leaders

The beautiful blessing Paul gives us in the second reading is worth spending time with: 'May God bless you with his love, and may the Holy Spirit join all your hearts together'. The more traditional version is used as a greeting at the beginning of Mass. Where in your life have you experienced God's love and blessing, and the unity and fellowship of the Trinity in your relationships? In what ways does Jesus give you a glimpse of God? For all of us, faith and belief is a continual journey. What are the things that impede this journey for you, and what are the things that encourage your efforts in this journey? What things in your life are 'life giving' for you? Just as the Trinity is a pattern of community for us, think about your own relationships. Consider the different attributes of God as Father, Son and Spirit. Make an effort to formulate separate prayers to each member of the Trinity, based on these characteristics.

Liturgy Outline

Trinity Sunday

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you are Father, Son and Spirit. You sent Jesus to teach us how to live and the Holy Spirit to encourage us. Help us to live in your ways and stay close to us always. Amen

FIRST READING Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Daniel 3
 Glory and praise forever!

(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL John 3:16-17

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: AS God's Children who face life with hope, let us pray to God:

- That the Church will be a symbol of hope and good relationships to all who come to her for help
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will be respectful to those who are in charge of us at home, at school and in our community
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will always try to get along and live peacefully with one another
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That all who feel rejected and condemned will know God's saving love
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Gracious God of the Trinity, listen to these prayers that we make in the power of your Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

The Body and Blood of Christ

White



Sometimes the most basic of everyday things are the things that we often overlook or take for granted. Bread is a staple food item that we often don't pay much attention to, but it is a very important part of our diet. Jesus was a person just like us – ordinary and special. Jesus told us that he is the bread from heaven – living bread - and he makes our lives special. During Mass we remember and give thanks for this. When we gather as a large family and share in the eucharistic meal we also share life with Jesus.

Gospel

John 6:51-58

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Jesus said to the crowd: "I am the bread from heaven! Everyone who eats it will live forever. My flesh is the life-giving bread that I give to the people of this world."

They started arguing with each other, and asked, "How can he give us his flesh to eat?"

Jesus answered: "I tell you for certain that you won't live unless you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man. But if you do eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will have eternal life, and I will raise you to life on the last day.

"My flesh is the true food, and my blood is the true drink. If you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you are one with me, and I am one with you.

"The living Father sent me, and I have life because of him. Now everyone who eats my flesh will live because of me.

"The bread that comes down from heaven is not like what your ancestors are. They died, but whoever eats this bread will live forever."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

Moses told the people: "Don't forget how the Lord your God led you in the desert for forty years. The Lord did this so that you would learn to depend on him. And he wanted to know if you were truly willing to obey him.

"The Lord made you go hungry. Then he gave you manna, a kind of food that you and your ancestors had never heard about. He did this to teach you that people need more than food to live. They need every word that the Lord has spoken.

"The Lord your God brought you out of Egypt, where you were slaves. He led you safely through a big and terrible desert that was full of poisonous snakes and scorpions.

"The Lord gave you water from solid rock. And in the desert he gave you manna, a kind of food your ancestors had never heard about. He tested you like this to teach you to depend on him, so that all would go well for you."

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 147

Response: **Praise the Lord, Jerusalem**

Everyone in Jerusalem, come and praise the Lord your God!
God lets you live in peace, and he gives you the very best wheat.

God gave his laws and teachings to the descendants of Jacob,
the nation of Israel.

But he has not given his laws to any other nation.

Shout praises to the Lord.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brothers and sisters:

When we drink from the cup that we ask God to bless, isn't that sharing in the blood of Christ? When we eat the bread that we break, isn't that sharing in the body of Christ? By sharing in the same loaf of bread, we become one body, even though there are many of us.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle, pita bread or roll and a glass of grape – juice

Images from the Readings

- Life-giving bread
- Flesh to eat
- Eternal life
- Depend on God
- Become one body

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

How can you tell when there is a special feast day in the Church year? (Liturgical colours, decorations, etc)

Today is a feast day called 'Corpus Christi' or 'The Body and Blood' Can you remember what Jesus calls himself? (Bread from heaven) Why do you think he chose that image? (bread is part of our daily diet, different breads are staple parts of different culture's food, common, readily available, cheap and affordable etc)

What sort of breads have you eaten? (wholegrain, pita, naan, bagel, pizza, rolls, damper or camp breads, French sticks, croissants etc)

Why do we use bread? (its filling, easy to carry – sandwiches)

In Holy Communion we receive another sort of bread, sometimes called a host or wafer. During the Mass the prayers of the priest consecrates this bread so that we receive Jesus in a special way/ When we share Holy Communion with our faith community we help to build ourselves into a strong family – just like at home when we share a meal together.

Are we only allowed to go to Communion when we are good? (no, we go to because we want to be good, and Jesus helps us)

Act of Worship

Jesus said, 'Do this in memory of me'. Invite the children to have a time of silence where they can remember a special thing that they have learnt about Jesus.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The first reading calls the Israelites to remember the wonderful gift of manna, the bread from heaven, which sustained them through their long journey to the Promised Land. The people had short memories and needed to be reminded of God's provision for them. Today's gospel comes after Jesus has fed multitudes with the loaves and fishes, and his reference to himself as the 'bread from heaven' links into the memory of the exodus journey undertaken by their ancestors. Food is a basic necessity for life, and bread is recognised as a cheap, nourishing staple for many cultures. However Jesus' allusion to the eating of this flesh and the drinking of his blood was shocking and unthinkable for many of his listeners. Blood was considered to be the life force of a creature (Gen 9:4) and the Law of Moses with its strict dietary laws prohibited its consumption. This was probably the most challenging teaching that Jesus gave, and was to prove to be the defining moment for many of the crowds who flocked around him. So the outcome of this discourse was that many of Jesus followers left. But Jesus doesn't back down when the arguments started. Instead he reasserts what he has already stated, adding the consequences of participating in the feast of his body. The giving of Jesus' flesh and blood for the life of the world refers to the dawn of a new covenant to be forged through the sacrifice of his death for the salvation of the world. Gathering together to remember Jesus' teachings, break bread and share the cup is one of the oldest traditions of the Church.

Reflection for Leaders

Jesus gave us a common food item to link us into the remembrance of his special gift of eternal life. Eating food, sharing meals, is a day-to-day experience for most of us. What significance does eating and drinking have in your life? What are the times that you gather with others to share food and drink, and with whom do you gather? What happens to relationships when you share meals with other people? If we receive the gift of Jesus himself in the Eucharist, what are the implications for us as we go out into the world? You might invite someone to share a meal with you this week, especially someone who might not otherwise have some company. During this week be conscious of being life-giving to others.

Liturgy Outline

The Body and Blood of Christ

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, your Son Jesus gave us the Eucharist to remember his suffering and death. Be with us in a special way as we celebrate this sacrament. Amen

FIRST READING Deuteronomy 8: 2-3, 14b-16a

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 147

Praise the Lord, Jerusalem
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL

John 6:51-58

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

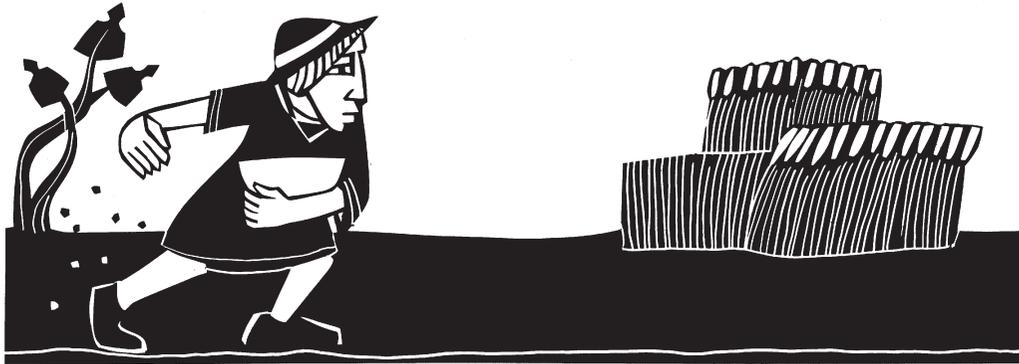
Leader: Encouraged by the Word we have just heard, we turn now will all our needs to God who loves us:

- That we will be sensitive and generous towards those in the world who are hungry and thirsty
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will be sensitive and generous towards those in the world who are hungry and thirsty
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For courage and strength in the face of the things that test us, that they bring us closer to God
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For tolerance and understanding among those in our family, school and community as we share food.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Gracious god you provide all that we need. Strengthen us through the spiritual food of the Eucharist and hear these prayers that we make to you through Jesus Christ our living bread from heaven.

All: Amen

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The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.



ORDINARY TIME

Readings

Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green



Gospel

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Not everyone who calls me their Lord will get into the kingdom of heaven. Only the ones who obey my Father in heaven will get in. On the day of judgment many will call me their Lord. They will say, ‘We preached in your name, and in your name we forced out demons and worked many miracles.’

But I will tell them; I will have nothing to do with you!

Get out of my sight, you evil people!’

“Anyone who hears and obeys these teachings of mine is like a wise person who built a house on solid rock.

Rain poured down, rivers flooded, and winds beat against that house. But it did not fall, because it was built on solid rock.

“Anyone who hears my teachings and does not obey them is like a foolish person who built a house on sand.

The rain poured down, the rivers flooded, and the winds blew and beat against that house. Finally it fell with a crash.”

The gospel of the Lord.

First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

Moses said to the people:

Remember these laws and think about them.

Wear them like a sign around your arm and on your forehead.

“Today I am giving you the choice of a blessing or a curse.

The LORD you God will bless you, if you obey the commands that I am giving you today.

But you will be under the LORD’s curse,

If you disobey these commands

And worship gods that are strange to you.”

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Response: ***Lord, be my rock of safety***

I come to you, LORD,

For protection.

Don’t let me be ashamed.

Do as you have promised

And rescue me,

And hurry to save me.

You, LORD God,

Are my mighty rock

And my fortress.

Lead me and guide me,

So that your name will be honoured.

Smile on me, your servant.

Have pity and rescue me.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Lectionary, a candle, picture of a house, and small building tools.

Images from the Readings

- Build a strong house
- Jesus is our rock
- Be considerate, giving
- Wise vs. foolish
- Listen and live by God's word

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

What do you need to build a strong house/building?

What makes those building materials strong?

Have you ever tried to build a house? E.g tree house, house with deck of cards, house of building blocks.

Did you find it easy to keep the house standing?

What did you use to keep it from falling apart?

Have you built a sand castle at the beach? Did it last?

Why do you think you couldn't keep it?

So where is the best place to build a house? What materials are best to build a house? If we chose to ignore the best place to build a house what will happen to the house?

Jesus is like the wise person who built his house on a rock – the rock of God's Word. Jesus listened and lived by God's word that made him a wise person. When we listen and live by God's Word we will become wise people too.

When we ignore his word, or don't live up to what we may say, we are like the foolish builder that built his house on sand that did not last very long. He made all of us in his image. He knew us before we were born. By ignoring his teachings we are ignoring the one person who knows us best.

Act of Worship

Name some of the wise things that Jesus did. Names some of the wise things that you do. Name some of the foolish things that you do? What can we do about the foolish things in our life? (we can learn to say sorry, try to learn a new and wise way to live) When we are getting ready to listen to God's Word at Mass, we remember God's wisdom and his gift of forgiving foolish people. We take time to think of the foolish things we have done. Then we remember that God forgives us and helps us to live a new way of life. Now we are ready to listen to God's Word. It will teach us how to live wisely like Jesus.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The readings these Sundays in Ordinary time continue to show us how to live as a community of disciples. The most basic attitude required is openness to receive. Jesus insists that the service of his disciples must be grounded in solid commitment to him. We are to be like the wise person who built his house on the rock of faith in God's Word. If our discipleship is not built securely we may not be able to endure criticism and failure. However if we are grounded in faith in Jesus we will be able to call on his wisdom and strength for endurance.

Jesus wants us to 'practice what we preach,' so what we say should be mirrored by what we do.

Reflection for Leaders

In today's Gospel Jesus has one clear message and that is to live life accordingly to faith in God's word. Daily we go about the everyday things that we encounter and forget that the finer things in life include prayer and reference to the word of God at some point. Jesus offers himself to us in every way possible. Jesus is like the solid rock and our lives are like the houses. If we build our lives on strong foundations and choose to follow Jesus, then we will please our Father in heaven. There is no time frame to building this faith house within our hearts but the reward is sharing eternal life with Jesus and his Father someday. If we choose to live without any acknowledgement or inclusion of God then we will be like the foolish builder who ended up with nothing. Will we build the house on rock or on sand? The choice is ours.

Liturgy Outline

Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you offered to us your Son Jesus to be our rock. Help us to accept Jesus into our lives and live to serve and give more than to be greedy and selfish.
Amen

FIRST READING Deuteronomy 11:18, 26 - 28

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 31
Lord , be my rock of safety
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL

Matthew 7: 21-28

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Trusting in the Lord our God always, let us pray:

- For the Church, that it continues to be a strong foundation in the lives of young people.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the Holy Spirit, to bring trust into our hearts so we learn and know about your true love for us.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to have a giving heart and share our things with those who have less.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For leaders of our church, communities, country, that you guide them when making important decisions.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Trustworthy God, our rock and founder, be with us and those that we pray for, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green



It is always special when you are specially chosen for something. When Jesus chose someone like Matthew to be his special friend, many people were shocked and confused. People didn't think Matthew was a good person because he was a tax collector, and many of them cheated people and kept money for themselves. But what happened to Matthew's life when Jesus picked him out for a special place on his team? Jesus changed the lives of all the people he met. Like Matthew we are not good all the time and still Jesus wants to be our friend, no matter what we have done.

Gospel

Matthew 9:9-13

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

As Jesus was leaving Capernaum, he saw a tax collector named Matthew sitting at the place for paying taxes. Jesus said to him, "Come with me," Matthew got up and went with him.

Later, Jesus and his disciples were having dinner at Matthew's house. Many tax collectors and other sinners were also there. Some Pharisees asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and other sinners?"

Jesus heard them and answered, "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. Go and learn what the Scriptures mean when they say, 'Instead of offering sacrifices to me, I want you to be merciful to others.' I didn't come to invite good people to be my followers. I came to invite sinners."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Hosea 6:3-6

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET HOSEA

Let's try our best to know the Lord. The coming of the Lord is as certain as the dawn. He will bless us like showers in winter and spring.

People of Judah and Israel, what must I do with you? Your love for me is merely a morning cloud or dew that quickly disappears. I sent prophets to you with my message of doom, and my judgment against you struck like lightning.

When you show mercy and obey me, it pleases me more than sacrifices and gifts.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 50

Response: **To the upright I will show the saving power of God**

Although you offer sacrifices and always bring gifts,
I won't accept your offerings of bulls and goats.

I am God Most High! The only sacrifice I want is for you to be thankful
and to keep your word.

Pray to me in time of trouble.

I will rescue you, and you will honour me.

Second Reading

Romans 4:18-21

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and sisters: God promised Abraham a lot of descendants. And when it all seemed hopeless, Abraham still had faith in God and became the ancestor of many nations.

Abraham's faith never became weak, not even when he was nearly a hundred years old. He knew that he was almost dead and that his wife Sarah could not have children. But Abraham never doubted or questioned God's promise. His faith made him strong, and he gave all the credit to God.

Abraham was certain that God could do what he had promised.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle and an invitation card

Images from the Readings

- Come with me
- I came to invite sinners
- The Lord's coming is as certain as the dawn
- Mercy and obedience please God
- Faith made him strong

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. How does it feel to receive a party invitation or be chosen for a big part in the school play, or perhaps a place in a sports team? How does it feel if you don't get chosen?

When Jesus chose Matthew to be one of his special groups of friends, most people were shocked. They thought that Jesus shouldn't be making friends with such people. Matthew wasn't very popular in that place, because he was a tax collector. Do you know why tax collectors weren't liked? When they collected taxes for the Romans who had invaded their country, they often took more money than they were supposed to and they kept the rest for themselves. Because the people felt that someone of their own race who worked for the enemy was cheating them, no-body wanted anything to do with tax collectors.

Do you think Matthew was surprised when Jesus chose him? What did Matthew do? Do you know what happened to Matthew after that? (he became one of the twelve apostles)

Do you think his life would have changed at all?

Is it possible for someone to be good all the time? Jesus doesn't stop being our friend when we aren't good.

Act of Worship

Sing, "Here I am Lord"

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The call to follow Jesus is not made to those who deserve it! Jesus often associated with marginalized people who were considered outcasts. Along with other professions, such as tanners, butchers and shepherds who dealt with animals, tax collectors – who dealt with Gentiles – were considered to be sinners. Eating with these people would cause the risk of being contaminated by their uncleanness. Customs Houses were situated on main roads so traders taking their produce to market in another region had to pass them. The payment of the taxes on these goods was deeply resented, along with the often-violent means of its collection. By calling Matthew Jesus opens himself up to criticism of the 'respectable' that judge virtue who are scandalised. For them the issue is clear – the only way for sinners to get close to Jesus is for them to become virtuous first. But Jesus is looking for people who take full credit for their actions and the consequences. Those proud of their respectability have no need of God, who is the one who justifies and saves. It is likely that

Matthew was at the Custom House when Jesus called him, and his response was immediate and wholehearted. Jesus answers his critics by quoting a line from the prophet Hosea. Rituals are hollow unless hearts that are merciful and obedient to the will of God accompanies them. What is ironic is that those who should know the will of God are blind to the message.

Reflection for Leaders

Today we see the immediate response that Matthew makes to the call of Jesus. For Matthew to simply leave everything behind and follow Jesus must have been just as difficult as it would be for us. Can you think of a time when you had to just drop everything and do something difficult? Reflect on your own response to the call to become a follower. What was it that called you? What are the things in you life that make it difficult to follow Jesus? It was obvious in Jesus' society who were marginalized and alienated. Who are the people who are excluded from you parish and community today? During this week look for the isolated in your community. Consider how the reading might change you response to them. Find a way that you can reach out and include one of them.

Liturgy Outline

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, your love for us is beyond measure. Help us to always be obedient to your will and show your mercy to all we meet just as Jesus showed us. Amen

FIRST READING Hosea 6:3-6
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 50
 To the upright I will show the saving power of God
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Romans 4:18-21
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 19:9-13
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Together let us bring our prayers to our God who cares for us:

- For the church and those chosen to lead her, that your presence will always be with them
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the leaders of our country be given the wisdom to govern with kindness and encouragement
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will notice and include those who usually get left out when teams are being chosen and friendships are being formed.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For those who are lonely and isolated, that they will know the presence of Jesus in their lives
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of welcome and second chances, we know that you never push us away even when we don't do what is right. We bring these prayers to you with confidence and hope, through Jesus Christ our Lord who came to eat with sinners

All: Amen

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The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

We often hear of the twelve apostles. Apostle means one who is sent on a special mission to do a special job. Do you know much about the apostles? Jesus handpicked them and spent time teaching them about the kingdom of heaven. What was the special mission that Jesus was sending them out to do? Who does this work today?



Gospel

Matthew 9:36-10:8

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

When Jesus saw the crowds, he felt sorry for them. They were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

He said to his disciples, "A large crop is in the fields, but there are only a few workers. Ask the Lord in charge of the harvest to send out workers to bring it in."

Jesus called together his twelve disciples. He gave them the power to force out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and sickness.

The first of the twelve apostles was Simon, better known as Peter. His brother Andrew was an apostle, and so were James and John, the two sons of Zebedee. Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew the tax collector, James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus were also apostles. The others were Simon, known as the Eager One, and Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Jesus.

Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with these instructions: "Stay away from the Gentiles and don't go to any Samaritan town. Go only to the people of Israel, because they are like a flock of lost sheep.

"As you go, announce that the kingdom of heaven will soon be here. Heal the sick, raise the dead to life, heal people who have leprosy, and force out demons. You received without paying, now give without being paid."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF EXODUS

The people of Israel left Rephidim. And two months after leaving Egypt, they reached the desert near Mount Sinai. They set up camp there at the foot of the mountain.

Moses went up the mountain to meet with the Lord God, who told him to say to the people:

"You saw what I, the Lord, did in Egypt. You know how like a mighty eagle I brought you here to me. Now if you will obey me and are faithful to me, you will be my people. The whole work is mine. But you will be mine in a special way and serve me as priests."

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 100

Response: **We are his people, the sheep of his flock**

Shout praises to the Lord, everyone on this earth. Be joyful and sing as you come in to worship the Lord

You know the Lord is God! He created us, and we belong to him; we are his people, the sheep in his pasture

The Lord is good! His love and faithfulness will last forever.

Second Reading

Romans 5:6-11

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and sisters: Christ died for us at a time when we were helpless and sinful. No one is really willing to die for an honest person, though someone might be willing to die for a truly good person. But God showed how much he loved us, even though we were sinful.

But there is more! Now that God has accepted us because Christ sacrificed his life's blood, we will also be kept safe from God's anger. Even when we were still God's enemies, he made peace with us, because his Son died for us. Yet something even greater than friendship is ours. Now that we are at peace with God, we will be saved by his Son's life.

And in addition to everything else, we are happy because God sent our Lord Jesus Christ to make peace with us.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a chart listing the apostle's names
- Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James, Thaddeus, Simon and Judas

Images from the Readings

- Sheep without a shepherd
- Workers for the harvest
- Power of healing
- You will be my people
- Greater than friendship

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Have you ever needed some help from your friends? What sort of things do they help you with? Sometimes only a special friend who knows you really well can help. What do you think Jesus meant when he was talking about the harvest and not enough workers?

Jesus had a group of very special friends.

When he saw all the people around him who needed help he felt sorry for them, and so he asked his friends to help. What sort of help did people need? Do people have the same needs today?

What are these twelve special friends of Jesus called? (the apostles)

What sort of people were they? (Fishermen, tax collectors, ordinary people – not religious people or doctors or lawyers)

Today we call the special people who do the same job, bishops. Do you know the name of any bishops? What do they do?

How did Jesus bring God's special love and care into this world?

Can you think of any other people today who do this?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to link hands and pray a special prayer of blessing and protection for the Pope, your bishop, your priest and all who share in the mission of the Church. Pray that God will send more workers to continue the mission.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The first reading gives us a wonderful image of God carrying his children on eagles wings. Not long out of Egypt, they are encamped at the foot of Mt Sinai awaiting the giving of the Law. The beautiful relationship God has with the people is outlined in this reading. Matthew's gospel was written for people who were mainly converts to Christianity from Judaism. The traditions and prejudices of their Jewish upbringing were still alive in their lives – including the enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans, the fear of contamination by pagan ideas and the suspicion of the Gentiles. Jesus recognises that his mission is to the people of Israel who are like a flock of lost sheep. The group of disciples Jesus chose to surround himself with and prepare for this missionary activity were an unusual choice of men. They were fishermen, a tax collector, a zealot, - only Judas Iscariot, who would later betray Jesus to the Jewish authorities, was well educated. It is assumed that the 'twelve' relate to the twelve tribes of Israel. The pity that Jesus felt as he looked with eyes of compassion upon those who flocked to listen to him and receive healing in their lives caused him to reach out to them in ministry and appoint others to help him carry on the work. The commission is urgent as he passes on authority and power to them.

Reflection for Leaders

If Jesus' commission given to the twelve was urgent then, it is no less so today. Recall a time when you were sent outside your comfort zone to do an unfamiliar task. How did you feel? When you look at the world today what are the things that move your heart to pity and compassion? Do you ever feel like a 'lost sheep'? As baptised people we share in the task of proclaiming that the Kingdom of God is close at hand, and to work towards its coming in the world through our service. What are the special gifts and talents that you have been given that could be used in service of others?

Which ministries are you called to?

How do you see the church today move outside its own boundaries to share the message of Jesus with the world?

During this week think about the people who are closest to you. How do you minister to them? Who ministers to you? Make time this week to allow yourself to be ministered to.

Liturgy Outline

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

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PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, You are our hope and our strength. Help us to follow Jesus and do the work you call us to. Amen

FIRST READING Exodus 19: 1-6a
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 100
 We are his people, the sheep of his flock
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Romans 5: 6-11
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 9:36-10:8
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: We have listened to God's word. Now let us pray to God with confidence:

- That the Church will always shepherd God's people with love, courage and justice
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For our Pope, our Bishops and our priests, that others will be willing to help them in the work that they do
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That those who are suffering and ill will find healing
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will understand what it means to have Jesus as our friend and have the courage to share this with others
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of comfort and protection, we bring these prayers to you knowing that you accept us and those, who we pray for. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green



Jesus gave his friends a job to do: to share the good news. They were not having an easy time and often felt afraid of doing things that they hadn't done before. Do you ever feel like that? Jesus tells them not worry or be afraid of people. Being afraid often stops us from doing the things that we need to do. Jesus gives us a wonderful word picture of just how tenderly God cares for us and how valuable we are.

Gospel

Matthew 10:26-31

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus said to his disciples: "Don't be afraid of anyone! Everything that is hidden will be found out, and every secret will be known.

"Whatever I say to you in the dark, you must tell in the light. And you must announce from the housetops whatever I have whispered to you.

"Don't be afraid of people. They can kill you, but they cannot harm your soul. Instead, you should fear God who can destroy both your body and your soul in hell.

"Aren't two sparrows sold for only a penny? But your Father knows when any one of them falls to the ground. Even the hairs on your head are counted. So don't be afraid! You are worth much more than many sparrows."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Jeremiah 20:10-12a, 13

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

I heard the crowds whisper, "Everyone's afraid! Tell on him! Tell on him!"

All of my friends are waiting for me to make a mistake. They say, "He will slip up. Then we can trap him and get even at last."

But the Lord is with me like a mighty soldier. And those troublemakers will stumble, then fall down and fail. They will be forever disgraced and terribly ashamed.

Lord All-Powerful, you test everyone who does right, and you know everything anyone thinks or feels.

Sing and praise the Lord! He rescues the helpless from cruel oppressors.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 69

Response: **Lord, in your great love, answer me.**

I pray to you, Lord. So when the time is right answer me and help me with your wonderful love.

Answer me, Lord! You are kind and good.

Pay attention to me! You are truly merciful

Protect me, God, and keep me safe!

I will praise the Lord God with a song.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a picture of two sparrows

Images from the Readings

- Don't be afraid of anyone!
- Every secret will be known
- Hairs on your head are counted
- You are worth much more
- He rescues the helpless

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Do you know how tall you are and what you weigh? How many teeth do you have? If I asked you exactly how many hairs were on your head, could you say?

What does Jesus tell us about the hairs on our head? What does he mean? (god knows us intimately, even better than we know ourselves, and loves and values us) How does this make you feel?

Have you ever felt frightened? Have you ever been unpopular, or on you own against the crowd? Did anyone stick up for you or take your side?

The disciples were having a difficult time and were feeling afraid. The Jews were pushing them out of the synagogues because of their belief that Jesus was the Messiah. God had a special love and care for each of them.

How did Jesus tell them about their value in God's eyes?

What about sparrows – have you ever seen them in your garden?

How many are there? What do you think they might be worth?

What does this tell us about how many God loves and cares for us?

Why does God care for us? (we are God's sons and daughters)

Does this change the way we might treat other people? Why?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to close their eyes and hold one hand cupped in front of them. Tell them to imagine that they are snuggled into God's hand. How does it feel? Silently in your heart thank God for his love and care.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The first reading is part of a powerful message by the prophet Jeremiah of the doom and destruction of Judah, illustrated by the smashing of a pottery jar. By recounting the message Jeremiah is subject to rejection by the people who refuse to receive the unwelcome message. Jeremiah's prayer is a beautiful heartfelt acknowledgement of God's care for his faithful servants. Matthew's gospel is written for Messianic Jewish Christians who are being expelled out of not just their synagogues, but also their traditional society and lifestyle. The future looked uncertain and lonely for them as they struggled to find a new way of living their faith. The comforting words of encouragement that Matthew offers assures them that they need not fear physical harm. Sparrows were sold in the market places as inexpensive food for the poor and so symbolised minimal value. If God holds common sparrows in such regard, then how much greater is the value of his beloved sons and daughters? The call to not be afraid is reinforced three times in this passage as a sequence of strongly argued contrasts is put forward. Jesus' words assure believers that their faith will be rewarded, and a time is coming when his teachings will be shouted from the rooftops and obvious all.

Reflection for Leaders

Swimming against the crowd is always a frightening and vulnerable place for us. Perhaps you could put yourself in the place of the early Christians who were being forced out of everything that was familiar to them. What things make you afraid as you journey towards greater personal commitment to Jesus in your life? When are you silent or what do you avoid doing so as not to have to defend your faith to others? During this week consider how your faith community values each individual. Does its care authentically reflect the value that Jesus tells us God places on each person? Look for an opportunity this week to actively witness to your faith in a public place.

Liturgy Outline

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you are our hope and our strength. Help us to follow Jesus and do the work you call us to. Amen

FIRST READING Jeremiah 20: 10- 12a, 13
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 69
 Lord , in your great love, answer me
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 10:26-31
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Let us call upon God who is near to us in every need:

- For the Church that we are able to share the good news with all people with courage and confidence
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That all people, especially those who are sad or lonely or confused, will come to know how tenderly God values them
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we move past our fears and do the work that God calls us to
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For all those who feel loss in their lives, that they will be comforted
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of wisdom and love, you understand all our feelings and needs even before we ask. We ask you to answer these prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

Some people have a mat at their door which says 'Welcome'. What does it mean to welcome someone? Have you ever felt welcomed, or unwelcomed? Jesus always had time for other people, even when he was feeling tired. In the reading today Jesus tells us that when we welcome others and are kind to them, it is just as if we are welcoming Jesus.



Gospel

Matthew 10:40-42

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus said to his disciples: "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me. And anyone who welcomes me also welcomes the one who sent me.

"anyone who welcomes a prophet, just because that person is a prophet, will be given the same reward as a prophet. Anyone who welcomes a good person, just because that person is good, will be given the same rewards as a good person.

"And anyone who gives one of my most humble followers a cup of cool water, just because that person is my follower, will surely be rewarded."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a

A READING FROM THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

One day Elisha went to the town of Shunem. A rich woman lived there, and she invited him for a meal. Each time Elisha was in town after that, he would eat at her home,

The woman said to her husband, "I'm sure that this man who comes by here so often is a holy man of God. Let's build him a small room on our flat roof. We can put a bed, a table, a chair, and an oil lamp in the room. He can stay there whenever he comes to visit us." The next time Elisha came to Shunem, he spent the night in his room.

Elisha asked his servant Gehazi, "What can we do to repay this woman for being so kind?"

Gehazi answered, "She doesn't have a son, and her husband is old."

Elisha said to Gehazi, "Tell the woman to come here." He told her, and she came and stood in the doorway of the room.

Elisha promised the woman, "Next year about this time you will have a son of your own."

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 89

Response: **For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.**

O Lord, you bless those who join in the festival and walk in the brightness of your presence. We are happy all day because of you, and your saving power brings honour to us

Second Reading

Romans 6:3-4, 8-9

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and sisters: Don't you know that all who share in Christ Jesus by being baptised also share in his death? When we were baptised, we died and were buried with Christ. We were baptised, so that we would live a new life, as Christ was raised to life by the glory of God the Father.

As surely as we died with Christ, we believe we will also live with him. We know that death no longer has any power over Christ. He died and was raised to life, never to die again.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a glass of water

Images from the Readings

- Welcome for God's messengers
- Recognition of God's presence in all
- Rewards for kindness and hospitality
- Baptism into new life
- Christ conquered death

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Would a glass of water make you feel welcomed?

What makes you feel welcome when you go somewhere new?

Have you ever been invited to stay for a meal or a sleepover at a friend's house?

How did they make you feel welcome?

Do you think it is important to make people feel welcome? Why?

Have you ever been made welcome just because of someone else that you both know?

This is what Jesus is talking about when he speaks of hospitality and kindness to one of his messengers or prophets. Do you know what a prophet is? (Someone who speaks a message from God)

Can you think of any people in your parish who help bring God's message to others? (RE teachers, Minister of the Word, priest etc)

What does Jesus tell us about how we should treat these people?

Jesus tells us that whatever we do for one of these people it is just the same as if we do that for Jesus.

What other ways might we be able to make the word of God known? (the help we give to people support for those who need help etc)

Act of Worship

Have some plastic cups and jugs of water on hand. Ask the children to give a small cup of water to someone else, remember as they do so that they are actually giving it to Jesus.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The message of hospitality, begun in the first reading in which Elisha acknowledges his gratitude for the gracious hospitality shown to him by the Shunemite woman, continues through to Jesus' time and beyond, with the generosity and hospitality shown by women of all ages who supported Jesus and his ministry, Today's gospel completes Jesus' instructions to the twelve before sending them out. It is addressed not just to them but all who would follow as his representative. In Biblical days an agent, or someone who acts on behalf of another, was seen to be the people themselves. Jesus recognises this concept when he affords great significance to the treatment of those who follow him, explaining that it derives from God himself through Jesus. Prophets, despite not always being comfortable people to be around, must have a very clear understanding of what God wants and have the courage to pass that message on to the people. Scripture is full of incidents where the people reject the messages brought the prophets. Those who welcome the truth of God's message are disciples, and though the cost of discipleship is often high, the rewards are great – and these rewards shift from the missionaries themselves to those who support and facilitate their mission.

Reflection for Leaders

Most things we choose in life have costs as well as rewards. Even those involved in ministry in our own communities pay a price for their commitment to God, Even Mary, the mother of Jesus was no immune to the cost of discipleship. Who are the modern day prophets, and what do they challenge us to? Persecution, common in the early Church for those who followed this new minority religion, is still in evidence today. In what ways might people be persecuted for their faith today? Can you name any ancient or modern day figures that have suffered such persecution? What cost has being a believer been to you personally? Consider what any small gestures you make in your day-to-day life might say to others about the person that you are? During this week make a special effort to be open and welcoming and offer hospitality to someone.

Liturgy Outline

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, You love and care for every person. Help us also to respect everyone as Jesus showed us, and remind us that by welcoming them we are really welcoming you. Amen

FIRST READING 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 89

Forever I will sing the goodness of the Lord
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Romans 6:3-4, 8-9

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 10:40-42

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: As God's chosen children let us ask our God to receive these prayers for all his children:

- That the Church becomes a place that welcomes everybody, especially those who don't belong anywhere else
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For generosity in what we share with each others and an openness to hearing God's message
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a spirit of kindness towards all people we come in contact with
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will be people with welcome in our eyes and our smiles
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of welcome and kindness, you have made us one family in Jesus Christ. In his name we ask you to answer these prayers and share your blessing and protection with us and all your people.

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**Green**

Is it important to be clever at school? Are grown-ups more clever than children? What do you do if you are worried about something and aren't sure what to do? How do you feel about people who have all the answers all the time? Jesus tells us that it wasn't the clever people who first understood him and his message. Jesus liked children and today he tells us that we need to come to him with the same trust as children have.



Gospel

Matthew 11:25-30

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

On one occasion Jesus said:

“My Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I am glad that you hid all this from wise and educated people and showed it to ordinary people. Yes, Father, that is what pleased you.

“My Father has given me everything, and he is the only one who knows the Son. But the Son wants to tell others about the Father, so that they can know him too.

“If you are tired from carrying heavy burdens, come to me and I will give you rest. Take the yoke I give you. Put it on your shoulders and learn from me. I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest. This yoke is easy to bear, and this burden is light.”

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Zechariah 9:9-10

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ZECARIAH

The Lord says this: Everyone in Jerusalem, celebrate and rejoice. Your king has won the victory, and he is coming to you. He is humble and rides on a donkey. He comes on the colt of a donkey.

I, the Lord, will take away all war chariots and horses from Israel and Jerusalem. Bows that were made for battle will be destroyed.

I will bring peace to nations, and your king will rule from sea to sea. His kingdom will reach from the Euphrates River across all the earth.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 145

Response: **I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God**

I will praise you, my God and King, and always honour your name.

I will praise you each day and always honour your name.

You are merciful, Lord! You are kind and patient and always loving.

You are good to everyone, and you take care of all your creation.

Our Lord, you keep your word and do everything your say.

When someone stumbles or falls, you give a helping hand.

Second Reading

Romans 8:9-11

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and sisters: You are no longer ruled by your desires, but by God's Spirit, who lives in you. People who don't have the Spirit of Christ in them don't belong to him.

God raised Jesus to life! God's Spirit now lives in you, and he will raise you to life by his Spirit.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a pile of stones (our burdens)

Images from the Readings

- Hidden from the wise and educated
- Come to Jesus
- This burden is light
- Gentle and humble
- A humble king is coming

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Who is the cleverest person you know? What is clever about them?

Do you sometimes feel as though other people have all the answers and you don't?

Jesus tells us that it wasn't the clever people who first understood him. Can you remember what he said?

What does this tell us about God?

What might make children and ordinary people more open to understanding Jesus than really clever people? (perhaps more trusting and open to God; often more truthful about themselves; more innocent; uncomplicated; less prejudiced)

When we work hard we sometimes get tired out. What if we had to carry around a bag of stones? that would be a burden for us. What does Jesus tell us to do when we feel like that? Do you think that we can really rely on God to take care of us?

When we listen to the reading today, what does it say about how Jesus wants us to act?

How can we learn to be like this?

Act of Worship

Jesus teaches us to offer prayers of praise to God. We can pray today's psalm together to praise God:

"I will praise you, my God and King, and always honour your name I will praise you each day and always honour your name."

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The first reading about the king riding on a donkey prefigures the coming of Jesus into Jerusalem on a donkey on Palm Sunday. The message is one of peace, contrary to expectations of the coming Messiah as a proud warrior. This sets the scene in the gospel for the contradiction of those receptive to Jesus' message being the educated and clever – another slight to the Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus maintains that understanding is for the humble, those who have a sense of wonder and awe. Matthew is writing this gospel to Jewish converts caught up in the turbulence of the times. They were people who had been brought up under burdensome yoke of the Law, so could identify with the struggle of trying to fulfil the restrictive requirements that did little to address the spirit of the law. Matthew's contention is that Jesus' yoke in contrast is easy and light. A yoke is a piece of agricultural tackle that went around the neck of an ox and was attached to a plough or cart that the ox could then drag along. Yokes are still in use in many parts of the world today. The gospel passage begins with Jesus praying a blessing, called a berakah. It is the basis of Jewish prayers of praise and thanksgiving and still in evidence in our own Eucharistic liturgy today.

Reflection for Leaders

The simplicity of Jesus' message in the gospel is a challenge to us all. It is easy to get so caught up in the academic expression of our faith that we lost the response of complete trust and wonder that marks openness to God. From whom do you learn in your life? What can you learn from Jesus? In today's society we can probably all identify with the call to come to Jesus when we are weary and overburdened. It is a call that is difficult to make in the hurry and bustle of our modern lifestyle. What are the things in your experience that cause you to feel 'burdened' and weighed down? Who do you know of for whom following the gospel has been both a joy and a burden? Can you identify someone in your vicinity who is struggling under the weight of cares and concerns? Perhaps you could look for opportunities to help ease their burden. Spending time in praise and thanksgiving can help lift us out of our mire, so be attentive to personal prayers of praise this week.

Liturgy Outline

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you care for us and want us to know you. Help us to share what we know about you with others just as Jesus did. Amen

FIRST READING Zechariah 9:9-10
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 145
 I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Romans 8:9-11
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 11:25-30
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: As people filled with god's Spirit, we bring our requests to God who gives us all that we need:

- That the people in god's family will always be ruled by god's Spirit
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That all those who feel burdened and troubled will find rest in Jesus
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a spirit of gentleness and humility
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That ordinary people always remain close to God and understand the message of Jesus that is hidden from those who consider themselves clever
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God most holy, keep us always close so that we can bring all our concerns to you. We ask this through Jesus Christ your Son.
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green



Do you like listening to stories? Jesus often told stories to teach people deep truths about God. These stories are called 'parables'. People often needed to go away and think about them before they got the message and understood what Jesus was trying to tell them. Sometimes he had to explain what his parables meant to his friends because even they didn't quite understand either.

Gospel

Matthew 13:1-9

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus went out beside Lake Galilee, where he sat down to teach. Such large crowds gathered around him that he had to sit in a boat, while the people stood on the shore. Then he taught them many things by using stories.

He said, "A farmer went out to scatter seeds in a field. While the farmer was scattering the seed, some of it fell along the road and was eaten by birds. Other seeds fell on thin, rocky ground and quickly started growing because the soil was not very deep. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched and dried up, because they did not have enough roots.

"Some other seeds fell where thorn bushes grew up and choked the plants. But a few seeds did fall on good ground where the plants produced a hundred or sixty or thirty times as much as was scattered. If you have ears, pay attention!"

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

The rain and the snow fall from the sky. But they don't return without watering the earth that produces seeds to plant and grain to eat. And that's how it is with my words. They don't return to me without doing everything I sent them to do.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 65

Response: **The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.**

Our God, you take care of the earth
and send rain to help the soil grow all kinds of crops.
Your rivers never run dry,
and you prepare the earth to produce much grain.

Wherever your footsteps touch the earth, a rich harvest is gathered. Desert pastures blossom, and mountains celebrate.

Meadows are filled with sheep and goats;
valleys overflow with grain and echo with joyful songs.

Second Reading

Romans 8:14-18

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and sisters: Only those people who are led by God's spirit are his children. God's Spirit doesn't make us slaves who are afraid of him. Instead, we become his children and call him our Father. God's Spirit makes us sure that we are his children.

His Spirit lets us know that together with Christ we will be given what God has promised. We will also share in the glory of Christ, because we have suffered with him.

I am sure that what we are suffering now cannot compare with the glory that will be shown to us.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a bowl of large seeds (ie corn)

Images from the Readings

- The seed that is the word of God
- Jesus is the sower
- Good ground
- God's word is life giving
- We are God's children

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Do you have a favourite story? Jesus told stories to the people who came to listen to him. Today he tells us a story about a farmer who sows seed. How did the farmer sow the seed? (demonstrate the hand sowing action to the children)

Do you remember what happened to the seed?

Have you ever planted seeds – maybe the lawn at home, or seeds at school to see how they grow?

When Jesus told his stories, he told about things people knew about to explain about the things of God, the things people can't see. What do you think Jesus meant when he spoke about the seed in this story? (God's word)

Some people don't listen; other people do listen but give up trying when things get difficult; others listen and understand – they put the message into action in their lives.

Did the story help you to understand what Jesus was explaining?

What sort of ground should we try to be?

How will we know that God's word is growing within us?

What things stop the word of God from growing in our lives?

What can we do to make sure that we produce a good harvest?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to say this prayer: "Dear God, let your word take root - and grow - and flower - in my heart! Amen"

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Parables were a familiar way of teaching in the time of Jesus. They used stories of everyday things to explain profound truths – and Jesus was a master at teaching this way. Some images had commonly understood meanings: for instance a vineyard, sons or servants were understood to represent Israel; while a master, king or father represented God. Using seed to give a picture of the word of God would help his followers understand something of the life, capacity for growth and productivity that they would understand seed to have; and the receptivity of the soil gives a picture of how we need to be open and receptive and not allow other concerns to crowd it out of our lives. This parable would have had a great appeal to the rural population living in the arable region around the Sea of Galilee – so unlike the desert areas further south around Jerusalem. The parable is aimed at those who are losing faith in Jesus – God will give the harvest.

Reflection for Leaders

This parable, which spoke so strongly to the rural people of Jesus day, continues to hold a powerful message for us today. We are called to examine ourselves to see what image of ground matches our receptivity to the word of God. Can you recall a time when God's word really connected with you, took root in your heart? What was this experience? Do the Scriptures form a rich source for your own prayer life? How might you improve this in a practical way? You might consider journaling your reflection on a short passage each night. Spend some time with today's reading, recognising a word or phrase that moves you. Share this with a friend.

What can you do to ensure your parish becomes a more fertile ground for the word of God? What may be some thorns in your heart that do not allow the word to fruit in you? During this week try to be rich soil, not just for the word of God, but for your family and those around you. Look to messages from God in the events of everyday life.

Liturgy Outline

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessed be God
Blessed be God

Leader: O God, we gather to listen to your words, so that we can learn to follow your ways. Help us to understand so that our hearts and lives are filled with your love. Amen

FIRST READING

Isaiah 55:10-11
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 65
The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)*

Romans 8:14-18
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL

Matthew 13:1-9
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: We know that God loves us, so let us pray for others and ourselves.

- That our Church be good ground where the word of God can grow and be shared with everyone
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the word of God makes us better people who show God's love in our actions, our thoughts and our words
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to really listen to what Jesus teaches us
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For those who are sick or lonely in our community. Today we pray for....
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of the harvest, we ask you to hear our prayers which we make in confidence through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Sixteenth Sunday In Ordinary Time

Green

Have you ever helped weed the garden? Why does no one like weeds? Today Jesus tells us another parable and wants us to think about what will happen at the end of time to those people who do not listen to him. Like the wheat and the weeds in our reading today, God allows good and bad people to live side by side. God wants to allow bad people a chance to change their ways before the end of time.



Gospel Matthew 13:24-30

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus told his disciples this story: "The kingdom of heaven is like what happened when a farmer scattered good seed in a field. But while everyone was sleeping, an enemy came and scattered weed seeds in the field and then left. When the plants came up and began to ripen, the farmer's servants could see the weeds.

"The servants came and asked, 'Sir, didn't you scatter good seed in your field? Where did these weeds come from?'

'An enemy did this,' he replied

"His servants then asked, 'Do you want us to go out and pull up the weeds?'

'No!' he answered. 'You might also pull up the wheat. Leave the weeds alone until harvest time. Then I'll tell my workers to gather the weeds and tie them up and burn them. But I'll have them store the wheat in my barn.'

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF WISDOM

There is no God but you, and you care for all of us. You don't have to prove that you judge fairly.

Your strength gives you the power to do right, and because you rule over all, you have pity on everyone.

When someone doubts how strong you are, you show your strength. And you correct everyone who is too proud.

You are a powerful Master. But you judge us with kindness and rule with great mercy, because you have the power to do whatever you want.

By doing such things, you have taught your people that those who do right must also care about others. And you have given your children a wonderful hope by helping them turn from sin.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 86

Response: **Lord, you are good and forgiving**

You willingly forgive, and your love is always there for those who pray to you.

Please listen, Lord! Answer my prayer for help

You, the Lord God, are kind and merciful.

You don't easily get angry, and your love can always be trusted.

Look on me with kindness.

Make me strong and save me.

Second Reading

Romans 8:26-27

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and sisters: In certain ways we are weak, but the Spirit is here to help us. For example, when we don't know what to pray for, the Spirit prays for us in ways that cannot be put into words. All of our thoughts are known to God. He can understand what is in the mind of the Spirit, as the Spirit prays for God's people.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a big weed (eg dandelion)

Images from the Readings

- While everyone was sleeping
- Good seed and weeds
- Let both grow
- Care about others
- The Spirit prays for us

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Have you ever helped weed the garden? What is a weed, and why does no-one like them?

How could you tell which plants were good and which ones were weeds? Did someone show you which ones to pull out?

What did Jesus mean when he talked about the wheat and the weeds? (God allows good and bad people to live beside each other. They will be separated at the end of time)

Why did the farmer tell his servants not to pull out the weeds until the harvest? (he didn't want to risk losing any of the good seed)

What does this tell us about people? (inside each of us is good and bad, but Jesus wants us to change the bad parts)

What does this tell us about God? (God is patient and good and allows people every chance to change their lives around)

When is a good time to sort out what is good and what is bad in our lives?

Act of Worship

Teach the children a simple sorry prayer, such as "Lord, we are sorry for the times we make mistakes and do wrong things. Help us to be good and remember what you have taught us. Amen"

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The book of Wisdom personifies the quality and nature of wisdom: it is more than just the quality of being wise – she is in fact a personification flowing out from God. Today's reading looks at God's patience and tolerance with Israel giving this community the example that it needs to follow God's own attributes. Reverence for the holiness of God encouraged the people of Israel to never even pronounce the Name of God, so when Matthew writes he characteristically refers to the Kingdom of Heaven rather than the Kingdom of God. His gospel this week continues the string of parables included in this chapter. The weeds that have come up with the wheat refers to an annual grass called darnel, which looks very much like wheat when it first shoots. The information is given that the farmer has indeed sown good seed, and that it is a conspiracy by the enemy which has spoilt the expected harvest. By choosing to allow both wheat and weeds to grow to maturity until they are separated at harvest, a picture is painted of a God who allows us every chance of reaching our fullest potential and changing that in us which is bad or imperfect. However the promise for the bad is clear – at the harvest they will be burnt.

Reflection for Leaders

The connection between good and evil is inherent in each of us. It can be hard for us when we are forced to face the imperfections in ourselves, and realise that we are not quite as good or perfect as we would like to believe ourselves. Often it can be harder to accept the faults in ourselves than in other people, but today's message is that we must learn to be patient as we grow in spiritual maturity. Identify some good and some bad aspects of your character. How do you deal with the parts of yourself of which you are ashamed or don't like? What concrete way can you see to weed these out of your character?

Can you see any signs of the kingdom in yourself? What about in your community or the world? This week concentrate on one thing you can do to make the kingdom come a little closer in your community / parish.

Liturgy Outline

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their
Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim
God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted
to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, our lives are a mixture of good and bad. Help us to know
the difference so that we can do what pleases you Amen

FIRST READING Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 86

Lord , you are good and forgiving
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Romans 8:26-27

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 13:24-30

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Jesus has told us to ask God for what we need, so as God's children
we pray:

- That our Church be a place that encourages us to give each other another
chance
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to be patient with ourselves when we make mistakes, so that
we can also be patient with each other
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we allow God's Spirit to help us and pray for us
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For courage for those who need to change their lives around
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of patience and mercy, accept the prayers that we make with
confidence through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Seventeenth Sunday In Ordinary Time

Green



Have you got something that is very precious to you? It might be something that isn't very important to anyone else, but is very special to you. Would you be willing to give it away or swap it? When you treasure something a lot, you usually are very careful with it. Where do people usually keep their treasures? Jesus explains to us that God's kingdom is like a priceless treasure that people would give their most precious possessions for.

Gospel

Matthew 13:44-46

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus said to his disciples: "The kingdom of heaven is like what happens when someone finds treasure hidden in a field and buries it again. A person like that is happy and goes and sells everything in order to buy that field.

"The kingdom of heaven is like what happens when a shop owner is looking for fine pearls. After finding a very valuable one, the owner goes and sells everything in order to buy that pearl."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

A READING FROM THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

One night at Gideon, God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, "Ask me for anything you want."

Solomon answered, "My Lord and God, I am your servant. You have made me king in place of my father David. But I don't know any more about being king than a child would know. And I must serve your chosen people, even though they are a great nation with more people than can be counted. Please make me wise enough to rule them well and know the difference between right and wrong. No one is really able to rule this great nation of yours."

The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked this, and he said: "I will answer your prayer. You will be wise and know more than anyone who has ever lived or ever will live. You didn't ask to live a long time or to be rich, and you didn't ask for your enemies to be destroyed. All you wanted was to be honest and fair."

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 119

Response: **Lord, I love your commands.**

You, Lord, are my choice, and I will obey you.

I would rather obey you than to have a thousand pieces of silver and gold.

Your laws mean more to me than the finest gold.

I follow all of your commands, but I hate anyone who leads me astray.

Second Reading

Romans 8:28-30

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and sisters: We know that God is always at work for the good of everyone who loves him. They are the ones God has chosen for his purpose, and he has always known who his chosen ones would be. He had decided to let them become like his own Son, so that his Son would be the first of many children. God then accepted the people he had already decided to choose, and he has shared his glory with them.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a jewellery box or treasure chest with a small card for each child.

Images from the Readings

- The kingdom of heaven
- Precious things
- Make me wise
- Always at work for our good
- Become like his own Son

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Close your eyes and think about this question: If you had to leave your house very quickly and you could only take one precious thing with you, what would it be?

What do you think your parents might take?

When you value or treasure something a lot do you look after it? Would you give it away or swap it with a friend? Why?

What makes it so precious to you?

Jesus tells us today that the kingdom of heaven is so valuable, worth more than all our possessions, that we would be very happy if we should sell everything in order to have it. What is he telling us when he says this?

Can you imagine the kingdom of heaven being that good?

What can we do to find the treasure of God's kingdom for ourselves? (live the way Jesus taught us, follow his example in the way we live our lives)

Act of Worship

Ask the children to write on a small card the thing that they have identified as being precious to them. During a quiet time ask them to bring this card up and place it in the treasure chest at the focus. (This treasure chest might be processed back in to the church at the end of children's liturgy – check you're your priest beforehand)

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The first reading recounts Solomon's prayer for wisdom at the very outset of his reign, and shows God's delight with this request. The gospel concludes its famous chapter of parables with two more simple word pictures that give insight into the joy and value of finding the kingdom of God using the imagery of everyday life. Pearls were highly valued in the Near East and also were regarded as a symbol of wisdom, giving rise to the saying 'pearls of wisdom'. The picture Jesus paints for us is of those who recognise the full value of spiritual wealth committing everything they own to acquiring it. Jesus shows his hearers that this is a fair swap, the kingdom is worth the sacrifice of everything we value most. It is interesting to speculate on why Matthew records two such similar parables together: is it for emphasis? Is it to compare the actions of the main characters? It was common practice for people to hide their valuables in those times when there were no banks. Treasure buried in a field would belong to the owner of the field. This treasure-finder re-hid the treasure until he could buy the field from the unsuspecting owner, thus establishing his own claim to the treasure. But Jesus passes no moral judgment on this questionable action, the emphasis is solely on the man's commitment to his quest.

Reflection for Leaders

Jesus sees the search for God as integral in the journey of life that we are all involved in. We are all searching for the 'treasure' in our life. Identifying what is real treasure and then committing ourselves to it wholeheartedly is a challenge for each one of us. The call of the gospel is simple – acquiring the kingdom of God involves paying a price. Can you identify what price you have paid in order to follow Christ? What are you prepared to give up? What moments of delight in your life have pointed you towards the kingdom? Think about the things which you value most highly. Does this gospel challenge your attitude to them? Make an effort this week to show in a special way how much you value someone.

Liturgy Outline

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you store up riches in heaven for us. Help us to know what is important so that we don't need to waste our time on worthless things.
Amen

FIRST READING 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 119
 Lord , I love your commands
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Romans 8:28-30
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL

Matthew 13:44-46
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Jesus has told us to ask God for what we need, so as God's children we pray:

- That we value the treasure that our Church holds for us
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to be value the things that are truly valuable in our life
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That delight in God's kingdom will be given to all who search for it
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the love of God will comfort those who are sick or poor in our community
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of faithfulness, we know that you are always at work for the good of those you love you. Answer our prayers through Jesus Christ your Son
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Eighteenth Sunday In Ordinary Time**Green**

In today's reading, Jesus is able to share a small quantity of food with thousands of people because of the power of God. It is this same power that allows him to share himself with us through the Eucharist - the Priest blesses the bread and wine just as Jesus blessed the food at this time. How do you think the disciples felt as they saw this miracle taking place in front of them? Even though they had seen many miracles they didn't cease to be amazed by the power of Jesus, proving once again that he was truly God's Son.



Gospel

Matthew 14:13-21

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

After Jesus heard about John, he crossed Lake Galilee to go to some place where he could be alone. But the crowds found out and followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw the large crowd. He felt sorry for them and healed everyone who was sick.

That evening the disciples came to Jesus and said, "This place is like a desert, and it is already late. Let the crowds leave, so they can go to the villages and buy some food."

Jesus replied, "They don't have to leave. Why don't you give them something to eat?" But they said, "We have only five small loaves of bread and two fish."

Jesus asked his disciples to bring the food to him, and he told the crowd to sit down on the grass. Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish. He looked up toward heaven and blessed the food. Then he broke the bread and handed it to his disciples, and they gave it to the people.

After everyone had eaten all they wanted, Jesus' disciples picked up twelve large baskets of leftovers. There were about five thousand men who ate, not counting the women and children.

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Isaiah 55:1-3

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

The Lord says this: If you are thirsty, come and drink water! If you don't have any money, buy food and eat it. Come and buy wine and milk without paying a cent. Why waste your money on something less than food? Why work hard for something that doesn't satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and you will enjoy the very best foods. Listen carefully! Come to me, and you will live. I will promise you the eternal love and loyalty that I promised David.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 145

Response: **You open your hand to feed us, Lord;
you answer all our needs**

You are merciful, Lord! You are kind and patient and always loving.
You are good to everyone, and you take care of all your creation.

Everyone depends on you,
and when the time is right, you provide them with food.
By your own hand you satisfy the desires of all who live.

Second Reading

Romans 8:35, 37-39

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and sisters: Can anything separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble, suffering and hard times, or hunger and nakedness, or danger and death?

In everything we have won more than a victory because of Christ who loves us.

I am sure that nothing can separate us from God's love – not life or death, not angels or spirits, not the present or the future, and not powers above or powers below. Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord!

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle , a plate of small rolls

Images from the Readings

- A place to be alone
- Give them something
- leftovers
- come to me and you will live
- nothing can separate us from God's love

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Have you ever missed out on something you wanted because someone else ate it all, or got more than you?

Today Jesus tells us about a time when there wasn't much to share, but when people did they found they had plenty to eat and lots left over. Do you know this story? What is it called? (the miracle of the loaves and fishes)

What is a miracle?

Why did Jesus tell his friends to give the crowd food themselves when they didn't have enough? Did they want to do it? Why?

If one of them had eaten all the bread and fish, what do you think would have happened?

How much was left over after everyone had eaten?

What does this tell us about Jesus?

Can you think of some other time when bread is blessed, broken and shared with others?

What happens when there isn't enough food in another country to feed the people there? What do you think Jesus wants us to do then?

Act of Worship

Jesus blessed the bread before he broke it. We too should thank God for our food and bless it: "Bless us, O Lord, and these your gifts which we are about to receive from your goodness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen"

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The reading from Isaiah was written to encourage the people exiled in Babylon. It is an invitation to the Master's banquet through the basic necessities of water, food, wine and milk, where the spirit will be satisfied. It ends with a renewal of the covenantal promise given to David. Prior to the gospel reading, John the Baptist had publicly denounced the marriage of Herod Antipas and his niece and sister-in-law Herodius. Herod Antipas had him arrested and executed. Jesus is grieved by the news of John's death and so withdraws to a place of solitude with his friends. But already his fame prevents this occurring as the people crowd with their own needs and Jesus' compassion wells up for them. The gathering eventually needs feeding, and the recounting of this event is the only miracle which is recorded in all four gospels. Jesus is challenging his disciples to take the initiative so that they can be trained as confident leaders after he has gone. It is significant that what is underlined is the concern that Jesus has for the basic physical needs of the people, not just the spiritual. With such meagre provisions the huge crowd is fed with abundance – a foretaste of both the Last Supper and later the Eucharist that was to form such a part of our tradition in the early Church and today.

Reflection for Leaders

Step by step Jesus trained his followers to care for others. His compassion for the crowds took priority over his own need for space and solitude. Can you identify a time when you have been moved by compassion for others? What happened? In the gospel Jesus takes the limited resources available through his disciples. In our country of plenty, how well do we share our abundance with the rest of humanity? What are the resources that you bring to Jesus for him to bless and share? During this week reflect on the miracle that we encounter in the Eucharist – Jesus takes bread – preparation of bread and wine; Jesus blesses God – eucharistic prayer of praise and thanksgiving; Jesus breaks bread – fraction rite; Jesus gives bread to be distributed – communion rite. Take some quiet time to look deeply at the special prayers of the liturgy.

Liturgy Outline

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you give us all that we need. Help us to share whatever we have with others, so that we can all have enough. Amen

FIRST READING

Isaiah 55:1-3
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 144
 You open your hand to feed us, Lord; you answer all our needs
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)*

Romans 8:35, 37-39
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL

Matthew 14:13-21

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Jesus showed us the way to share all that we have. Let us pray for ourselves and others for all that we need:

- That all who are hungry for God can come and be welcomed into our Church family
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to be thoughtful and generous with each other, sharing what we have even though it seems little
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a sense always of God's gifts to us, all that we need and more
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a special closeness to God for ourselves and all those who struggle or go through hard times
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of compassion, you fill our lives with all that we need and even more than that. Hear the prayers of your children as we turn to you in trust, through Jesus Christ your Son

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Nineteenth Sunday In Ordinary Time

Green



Jesus often taught his friends about faith, and the amazing things that could happen when it was strong. Today, we hear about a time when Peter discovered that even he could walk on water if he kept looking to Jesus. What happened that made Peter begin to sink? What did he do when this happened? Peter often let Jesus down because his faith was weak, but Jesus always reached out to save him, just as he does with us when we call out to him.

Gospel

Matthew 14:22-33

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus made his disciples get into a boat and start back across the lake. But he stayed until he had sent the crowds away. Then he went up on a mountain where he could be alone and pray. Later that evening, he was still there.

By this time the boat was a long way from the shore. It was going against the wind and was being tossed around by the waves. A little while before morning, Jesus came walking on the water toward his disciples. When they saw him, they thought he was a ghost. They were terrified and started screaming.

At once Jesus said to them, "Don't worry! I am Jesus. Don't be afraid."

Peter replied, "Lord, if it is really you, tell me to come to you on the water."

"Come on!" Jesus said. Peter then got out of the boat and started walking on the water toward him.

But when Peter saw how strong the wind was, he was afraid and started sinking.

"Lord, save me!" he shouted.

Right away Jesus reached out his hand. He helped Peter up and said, "You surely don't have much faith. Why do you doubt?"

When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, the wind died down. The men in the boat worshipped Jesus and said, "You really are the Son of God!"

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a

A READING FROM THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

Elijah went into a cave and spent the night. The Lord said, "Elijah, go out and stand on the mountain. I am going to pass that way."

At once a strong and mighty wind shook the mountain and shattered the rocks. But the Lord was not in the wind.

An earthquake shook the ground, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire.

After the fire, hardly a sound was heard. Elijah covered his face with his robe and went out and stood at the entrance to the cave.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 85

Response: **Lord, show us your mercy and love and grant us your salvation**

I will listen to you, Lord God,
because you promise peace to those who are faithful.
You are ready to rescue everyone who worships you,
so that you will live with us in all of your glory.

Love and loyalty will come together; goodness and peace will unite.
Loyalty will sprout from the ground; justice will look down from the sky above.

Our Lord, you will bless us; our land will produce wonderful crops. Justice will march in front, making a path for you to follow.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a large bowl with floating candles, a sprig of greenery for the sprinkling rite

Images from the Readings

- Tossed around by the waves
- They were terrified
- Come on!
- Why do you doubt?
- Hardly a sound

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Have you ever played the game where you close your eyes and allow yourself to fall back into someone's arms to catch you?

Who would you choose to play this game with? (someone you trust – parent, teacher friend etc). When do you turn to these people?

In the gospel the disciples are feeling very afraid. What made them feel like that? What things make you afraid?

Did the disciples trust Jesus? How do you know?

What did Peter do when Jesus called to him to trust him?

Why do you think only Peter got out of the boat and started to walk towards him?

Do you think he was brave?

Why did he start to sink? (he began to think about the wind and let his fear take his mind off Jesus)

What did Jesus do when Peter called out to be saved?

What does this story tell us about Jesus?

Act of Worship

Use the bowl of water in prayer today. Talk about how God's word at creation drew order out the water chaos, and Jesus' word calmed the storm. With a sprig of greenery, sprinkle some of the water over the children with the words "Don't be afraid". Teach the children to make the sign of the cross as the drops of water touch them.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Elijah's experience of God in the first reading follows his triumph over the priests of Baal on Mt Carmel and his sudden fear of Jezebel which sent him scuttling into the sanctuary of a cave. God visits him, not in the power of the elements, but in the still, small voice of a gentle breeze. In the gospel, Jesus too has retreated to a quiet place to be alone with God while his disciples were in a boat on the Sea of Galilee, crossing from the Jewish side into gentile territory just as he has instructed them. Dangerous storms here can blow up very rapidly and with ferocity, so it was understandable that the disciples were frightened. The Hebrew people recognised in the waters of the sea a symbol of the chaos from which creation sprang and were always a little mistrustful of the water. Matthew gives the only account of Peter's abortive efforts to do as Jesus was doing. The church is often symbolised as a boat (the barque of Peter) and at the time Matthew was writing this may symbolically reflect something of the events of the time. Many had been forced out of their synagogues, away from traditional Judaism and an increasing number of gentiles were coming to belief in Jesus. Matthew gives Peter's actions prominence, the bold impulsiveness of his initial trust followed by the distraction of his fears and doubts. It is in taking his eyes and focus off Jesus that Peter sinks. But comfort in the stretched out hand of Jesus to rescue him and the calming of the storm restores morale and increases the faith of those present.

Reflection for Leaders

Peter's experience can echo for us times when we have been caught in storms of fear and confusion and felt like we were going under. Removing our focus from Jesus can cause our doubts to multiply and allow us to sink. Can you think of a time when you experienced the calming action of Jesus? What are the things that can be a distraction on your personal faith journey that have caused you to remove your focus from Jesus? What are the things that have helped keep you afloat? During this week be aware of the fears of others in your family or workplace, and be a soothing, calming influence for them.

Liturgy Outline

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you call us to faith and courage. Help us to have the courage of Peter to take risks, and reach out to us when we need to be rescued. Amen

FIRST READING 1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 85
 Lord , show us your mercy and love and grant us your salvation
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 14:22-33
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Just as Peter was able to call out to Jesus for help when he was sinking, so can we bring all our needs to God with confidence:

- That the Church be a place of comfort for all those who are afraid
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to be bold and courageous as we do what Jesus tells us
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the courage to believe all things are possible when we have our eyes on Jesus
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the gift of faith and comfort for all those who feel like they are in the middle of a storm
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Saving God, you reach your hand to us when we call for help. Hear these prayers that we bring to you through Jesus Christ your Son
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Twentieth Sunday In Ordinary Time

Green

Jesus spent a lot of his time travelling from place to place, teaching people and performing miracles. Sometimes he needed to get away from people and rest. The people from the nations around Israel practiced pagan religions, and when this woman came begging Jesus to help her daughter, Jesus at first seemed reluctant. Why was this? What convinced Jesus to change his mind about this situation? What can we learn from this passage about Jesus, the message that he brought, and who it was for?



Gospel

Matthew 15:21-28

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus went to the territory near the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Suddenly a Canaanite woman from there came out shouting, "Lord and Son of David, have pity on me! My daughter is full of demons."

Jesus did not say a word. But the woman kept following along and shouting, so his disciples came up and asked him to send her away.

Jesus said, "I was sent only to the people of Israel! They are like a flock of lost sheep."

The woman came closer. Then she knelt down and begged, "Lord, please help me!"

Jesus replied, "It isn't right to take food from the children and feed it to the dogs."

"Lord, that's true," the woman said, "but even dogs get the crumbs that fall from their owner's table."

Jesus answered, "Dear woman, you really do have a lot of faith, and you will be given what you want."

At that moment her daughter was healed.

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

The Lord said, "Be honest and fair!

"Soon I will come to save you, and my saving power will be seen. Foreigners will follow me. They will love me and worship in my name. They will respect the Sabbath and keep our agreement.

"Then I will bring them to my holy mountain and let them celebrate in my house of worship. Their sacrifices and offerings will all be welcome on my altar. And my house will be known as a house of worship for all nations."

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 67

Response: **O God, let all the nations praise you!**

Our God, be kind and bless us!

Be pleased and smile.

Then everyone on earth will learn to follow you,
and all nations will see your power to save us.

Let the nations celebrate with joyful songs,
because you judge fairly and guide all nations.

Make everyone praise you and shout your praises.

Pray for his blessings to continue

and for everyone on earth to worship our God.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a large candle and a tray of tea-lights

Images from the Readings

- Have pity
- Send her away
- Even dogs get crumbs from their owner's table
- Reward of faith
- House of prayer

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Have you ever been interrupted when you were doing something important? How did it feel?

Jesus was interrupted by a Canaanite woman who wanted his help for her sick daughter. What do we know about the woman in the gospel today? We are told she was a Canaanite – a pagan religion despised by those who followed the Jewish religion. (she was also persistent, vocal, determined, had a quick wit and a strong faith that Jesus could help her daughter)

Why do you think she was shouting out to Jesus to help her?
(she was desperate for help)

Why did Jesus ignore her at first? What made him change his mind?

What does this tell us about Jesus and about the work that God sent him to do?
(Jesus is ready to help anyone who asks because he loves all of us, and when our faith in God is strong enough our prayers will be answered. God's message was for everyone, not just the Jewish people.)

What do you think we should learn from this story?

Act of Worship

Light tea-lights from the large candle (symbolising God's love) to show the spreading of the message of God's love to all people everywhere. Ask the children to name people of other nations, or people who are excluded in their own community or school and pray together that God's love will touch them in a special way.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

All the readings for this week speak of foreigners who have accepted faith in the one God. Isaiah speaks of a new inclusiveness in the attitude to faithful foreigners who had returned with the Hebrew people after their exile in Babylon, who were being welcomed to join in the Jewish faith. When we join the gospel story today, Jesus is near the cities of Tyre and Sidon, leading towns of ancient Phoenicia on the Mediterranean coast of what is now Lebanon. The Phoenicians were descendants of the ancient Canaanites. Israel despised the Canaanites for their pagan practices and fertility rites. Up until this time Jesus has been dealing only with his own people, but in her persistent desperation this woman forces him to recognise the truth that salvation is available to all who have faith. Here we see the tiny beginning of the universal mission and Jesus is generous with both his praise and his healing power in response. This event was used by Matthew to illustrate the movement of Christianity from a Jewish to a gentile setting that was taking shape in his time – a move that many in his community were struggling to come to terms with themselves.

Reflection for Leaders

Being marginalized or excluded is a lonely experience for many. In our communities today we often need to consider our own response to people of other nations, cultures and races. Maybe the readings today challenge our thinking. Reflect on a time when you have felt alien and unwelcome, or treated unfairly. How did it feel? Do you find it easy to stick up for yourself or someone close to you as this woman had to do? Her quick wit and easy repartee must have helped her achieve her aim. As we follow the gospel reading today we almost have a sense of Jesus learning or having a revelation about the extent of his mission. Have you had an experience of a 'moment of revelation' like this? During this week try to put into practice some of the learnings from this gospel – try to include an outsider.

Liturgy Outline

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, we believe in you and we love you. Make our faith as strong as the Canaanite woman so we can come to you whenever we need your help. Amen

FIRST READING Isaiah 56:1, 6-7
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 67
 O God, let all the nations praise you!
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 15:21-28
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: We are God's children, and Jesus tells us that we can ask God for what we need. So together we pray:

- That our Church be a house of worship for all people
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we are aware when others need help and never exclude them
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For persistence in our prayer
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That more generous people will serve God's people wherever they are needed in the world
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Saving God, you have compassion for all people who cry to you for help. Hear the prayers that we bring to you in faith through Jesus Christ your Son
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Twenty-First Sunday In Ordinary Time

Green



Because of the miracles that Jesus performed, and the way that he taught the crowds, the people knew that Jesus was a very special person. They thought that he was a prophet – a person who brought God's message to them. Jesus wanted to know who his special group of friends thought he really was. Only Peter was able to give the answer, and this was how Jesus knew that he was to lead the Church. Who leads the Church today? What do we believe about Jesus? Do people today understand who Jesus really is? If Jesus asked you this question, what would you answer?

Gospel

Matthew 16:13-20

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

When Jesus and his disciples were near the town of Caesarea Philippi, he asked them, "What do people say about the Son of Man?"

The disciples answered, "Some people say you are John the Baptist or maybe Elijah or Jeremiah or some other prophet."

Then Jesus asked them, "But who do you say I am?"

Simon Peter spoke up, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Jesus told him: "Simon, son of Jonah, you are blessed! You didn't discover this on your own. It was shown to you by my Father in heaven. So I will call you Peter, which means 'a rock.' On this rock I will build my Church, and death itself will not have any power over it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and God in heaven will allow whatever you allow on earth. But he will not allow anything that you don't allow."

Jesus told his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Romans 11:33-36

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and sisters: who can measure the wealth and wisdom and knowledge of God? Who can understand his decisions or explain what he does?

"Has anyone ever known the thoughts of the Lord or given him advice?

Has anyone loaned something to the Lord that must be repaid?"

Everything comes from the Lord. All things were made because of him and will return to him. Praise the Lord forever! Amen.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 138

Response:

Lord, your love is eternal.

With all my heart I praise you, Lord.

In the presence of angels I sing your praises.

I worship at your holy temple.

I praise you for your love and your faithfulness.

When I asked for you help,

you answered my prayer and gave me courage.

Though you are above us all, you care for humble people,

and you keep a close watch on everyone who is proud.

Your love never fails. You have made us what we are.

Don't give up on us now!

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a rock and a key

Images from the Readings

- Son of Man
- The Messiah
- On this rock I will build my Church
- Keys to the kingdom
- Depths of God

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. What did Jesus ask the disciples? He was continually revealing himself to the people around him, and he still does this today.

What did the people of that time think about Jesus? (that he was a prophet)

How do you learn more about Jesus today?

We need to know more about who Jesus is for us to be able to answer his question for ourselves. How can you tell if people really know who Jesus is?

What did Jesus think about the answer that Peter gave to the question? (he was pleased - God had shown Peter this)

What happened then? (Jesus changed his name from Simon to Peter, and told him that he would lead the Church)

How do you think Peter might have felt?

Who leads the Church today? (you might like to talk a little about the new Pope, and about your local Bishop)

Act of Worship

Give the children a copy of the Apostle's Creed to say together – allow younger children to echo the lines.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen

Background to the Readings for Leaders

It is in our first reading today that Paul comes to a place where he has reached the limit of understanding of God's purposes – and we are led to a place of marvel at the wonder of God. This leads us to our gospel reading where Jesus is asking the disciples for their view of his identity. Simon Peter gathers the fragments of truth that have been put forward to offer the revelation that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. For this divine insight he is offered a new name – Peter the rock– just as many of the major identities of old had been eg. Abram to Abraham. The authority of the future church was conferred upon his shoulders. Caesarea Philippi was a pagan centre of worship, north of Galilee. Herod the Great had built a white stone temple there and it later became the capital for his son, Philip. The temple had been built at a natural spring, the source of the River Jordan, and dedicated to the Roman god of nature, Pan. It was at the high rock at the cave of Pan where it is believed Jesus told Peter that he would be the rock on which the Church was to be built, dedicated not to a pagan god but to the one true God

Reflection for Leaders

Peter's response to Jesus, like our own, was sometimes strong and positive, and other times faltering and flawed. But he was open to God and so open to receive the fullness of revelation. If we remain open to the gift of faith we are also offered forgiveness when we fail in our journey of faith. When have you experienced the ups and downs of faith in your life? If Jesus were to ask you today 'Who do you say I am?', what would your response be? Jesus speaks of the Church that was being birthed and the authority that was being given to Peter was passed down to successive Popes. This Church is now 2000 years old. How do you think of the Church today? In the places where you have authority, in your home and your workplace, consider the responsibilities of your decisions, and be aware that you make these out of your role as a follower of Jesus.

Liturgy Outline

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

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To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, we put our trust in you. We believe that you loved us so much that you sent your only Son. Help us to know you better so that your love shines in our lives. Amen

FIRST READING Romans 11:33-36
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 138
 Lord , your love is eternal
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 16:13-20
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: We know that God loves us, so together let us pray for others and for ourselves:

- That our Church uses the authority given to Peter with compassion and wisdom
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That forgiveness always be a sign that God is present in our lives and in our schools communities
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the faith to be open to God and the insights that God gives us
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That those who are in need this week will be able to trust the power of the leaders of our country
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of insight, like Peter we come to know you in faith. In that faith we bring to you these prayers for ourselves and others, through Jesus Christ your Son

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Twenty-Second Sunday In Ordinary Time –Year A

Green

Do you like to do difficult things when you can see an easier way? Sometimes we need to do the right thing, even if it is hard. Jesus tells us that we should not try to take the easy way out, but to follow his way, even when it is hard. Why was Peter so upset by what Jesus was saying in today's reading? What would he have preferred Jesus to do? When we are trying to live as Jesus tells us and find it very hard, should we give up easily? How can we manage to do the hard and difficult things that being a follower of Jesus requires of us?



Gospel

Matthew 16:21-25

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus began telling his disciples what would happen to him. He said, "I must go to Jerusalem. There the nation's leaders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law of Moses will make me suffer terribly. I will be killed, but three days later I will rise to life."

Peter took Jesus aside and told him to stop talking like that. He said, "Lord, surely God won't let this happen to you!"

Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Satan, get away from me! You're in my way because you think like everyone else and not like God."

Then Jesus said to his disciples: "If any of you want to be my followers, you must forget about yourself. You must take up your cross and follow me. If you want to save your life, you will destroy it.

"But if you give up your life for me, you will find it."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Jeremiah 20:7-9

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

Jeremiah spoke to the Lord and said: "You tricked me, Lord, and I was really fooled. With your mighty power you defeated me.

"No one ever stops sneering or telling jokes about me. All I can say to anyone is 'Death and destruction!'

"Your message has brought me insults and abuse. Sometimes I say to myself, 'I won't think about you or mention your name.'

But your message is like a fire burning inside me, and I can't keep quiet.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 63

Response: **My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God**

You are my God. I worship you.

In my heart I long for you, as I would long for a stream.

I have seen your power and your glory in the place of worship.

Your love means more than life to me, and I praise you.

As long as I live, I will pray to you. I will sing joyful praises

and be filled with excitement like a guest at a banquet.

Second Reading

Romans 12:1-2

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Dear friends, God is good.

So I beg you to offer your bodies to him as a living sacrifice, pure and pleasing.

That's the most sensible way to serve God.

Don't be like the people of this world, but let God change the way you think.

Then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to him.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle and a cross

Images from the Readings

- Journey to Jerusalem
- You're in my way
- Take up your cross
- Fire burning inside me
- Bodies as living sacrifice

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Why was Peter so upset by what Jesus was saying? (He didn't want to see Jesus suffer and die)

What do you think Jesus meant when he said that Peter thought like everyone else and not like God? (Peter wanted to take the easy way out because he didn't properly understand God's plan)

Do you think Jesus was scared? What did he do?

What did he mean when he said that his followers should forget about themselves? (Doing things that are not always easy to do – being kind to others, forgiving others even when they have hurt us, making difficult choices when necessary)

How can we live as Jesus wants us to?

What happens when it gets really difficult to do this? Should we give up easily?

Think about the sort of things you run away from or quit from. What can you do to help you face up to these things?

Do you think it is easy to be a follower of Jesus? Was it easy for Peter? Is it easy for you or your family?

Act of Worship

Practice the sign of the cross with the children today. Make the gestures boldly and reverently. Explain the significance of this ritual as an act of worship that so identifies us both as Christians and particularly as Catholics.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Jeremiah's prophecy was proving to be an immensely unpopular message. As the power of Assyria was falling, Israel began looking towards Egypt, and Jeremiah could see that this was unwise. He was put in public stocks and we find him in the first reading bemoaning his situation to God. Despite this the message burns within him compelling him to speak it anyway. Today Jesus makes his first prediction of his passion and death as he journeys towards Jerusalem. It is the start of the story that continues over the next four chapters of Matthew's gospel. Peter is dreadfully upset by these comments and blurts out his opposition. There is a marked contrast between Jesus' response to Peter this week, almost vilified for standing in the way of the divine mission, and that of last week when Peter was highly praised for his affirmation. Peter's failure is to see that the cross is part of God's plan – his understanding of Jesus' mission is not complete. The call to take up their cross is a condition of discipleship, and a daily commitment. This image would have been a familiar sight in the time of the Roman occupation. The term 'Satan' originally meant adversary or accuser. Later it came to mean the personification of evil.

Reflection for Leaders

The cross is the central symbol of the Christian faith. It reminds us immediately of the death of Jesus through which God's plan of salvation was attained. It also reminds us of our own struggles and failures and suffering. As you reflect this week on your life, what obstacles to discipleship can you identify? Are they of your own making, or blocks put in your path by circumstances or other people? How would you name the cross that you carry? Has there been a specific time when you have made an active choice to face a hardship or pain rather than avoid it? Has this changed you? Perhaps you have become a stronger person through it. Can you name persecutions other than martyrdom that are faced by Christians today, even in our own country? During the week observe the crosses that burden other people, and look for a way to help relieve someone.

Liturgy Outline

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

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PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you sent your Son, Jesus, to show us the way to live. Give us the strength and courage to do the right things when we struggle.
Amen

FIRST READING Jeremiah 20:7-9
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 63
 My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Romans 12:1-2
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 16:21-25
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: We all have crosses to carry in this life, but Jesus tells us we can turn to God for help whenever we need it. So together we pray:

- That our Church is always first in helping to lift the burdens from people who suffer
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For strength for all people who want to be followers of Jesus
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For all people who suffer because of their faith
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That those who serve God will do everything that is good and will please God
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of compassion, sometimes it is hard to be your followers. Give us, and those we pray for, the strength to do the right thing always, through Jesus Christ your Son
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Twenty-Third Sunday In Ordinary Time**Green**

Have you ever been given a list of instructions to follow when someone goes away for a while? Jesus is preparing his friends for the time that he will be gone, and is telling them what they must do if there are disagreements between themselves. Jesus says that they need to give each other a chance to make amends in private, and support each other when they have complaints against someone. Is it easy to sort things out without making a big fuss when people have been unfair to you?

Gospel

Matthew 18:15-17

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus said to his disciples: "If one of my followers sins against you, go and point out what was wrong. But do it in private, just between the two of you. If that person listens, you have won back a follower. But if that one refuses to listen, take along one or two others.

"The Scriptures teach that every complaint must be proven true by two or more witnesses. If the follower refuses to listen to them, report the matter to the church.

"Anyone who refuses to listen to the church must be treated like an unbeliever or a tax collector."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Ezekiel 33:7-9

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

The Lord said: "Ezekiel, you are a mere human, but I have chosen you to be a watchman for the people of Israel. So listen to what I say and then warn them for me.

"When I tell evil people that they will die because of their sins, you must try to make them turn from their evil ways. If you don't warn them, you are responsible for what happens to them. If you do warn them to turn from their evil ways, and they don't then they will die. But you won't be responsible."

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 95

Response: **If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts**

Sing joyful songs to the Lord!

Praise the mighty rock where we are safe.

Come to worship him with thankful hearts and songs of praise.

Bow down and worship the Lord our Creator!

The Lord is our God, and we are his people,
the sheep he takes care of in his own pasture.

Listen to God's voice today!

Don't be stubborn and rebel as your ancestors did at Meribah
and at Massah out in the desert.

For forty years they tested God and saw the things he did.

Second Reading

Romans 13:8-10

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and sisters: Let love be your only debt! If you love others, you have done all that the Law demands.

In the Law there are many commands, such as,

"Be faithful in marriage. Do not murder. Do not steal.

Do not want what belongs to others."

But all of these are summed up in the command that says, "Love others as much as you love yourself." No one who loves others will harm them. So love is all that the Law demands.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle and a cross

Images from the Readings

- Confronting in private
- Two witnesses
- Turn from evil
- responsibility of the prophet
- The Law demands love

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

If you have a fight with one of your friends, how do you fix things?

Jesus is preparing his friends for the time that he will be gone by giving them some instructions or guidelines for how to treat people who hurt us and mend broken relationships.

Is it possible to do this and still be friends with someone?

What do you feel like doing when someone is really unfair to you? Is this what Jesus says to do?

Can you remember what Jesus says to do? (make amends in private if possible, and support each other when there are complaints about someone)

Do you know the very special sacrament that we have in the Church to help restore our relationship with God and with each other? (Penance – Reconciliation)

What happens when we receive this sacrament? (we admit our wrongdoing, ask God to forgive us, do a penance and are forgiven our sin)

Act of Worship

Explain to the children about the penitential rite as part of the Mass:

Lord have mercy	Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy	Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy	Lord have mercy

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Ezekiel, in the first reading, was among the first to be deported to Babylon in 597 BC, and it was there that he received the call to be watchman for his people. His function is to prepare them for the restoration of their city, but this will only be on the basis of their true repentance. The letter to the Romans follows with its handling of the principles of Christian living. All the commandments are gathered into the one concept, 'love' – the love that is of the will, part of God's language, freely and endlessly giving. Matthew's gospel contains this section dealing with ways the community can regulate its behaviour in a spirit of love. Always when people are in relationship with each other there will be areas of conflict and dealing with these in ways that honour the teaching of Jesus is a challenge. All efforts to correct those in the community who are at fault must be made before the final step of exclusion from the group. Testimony of two witnesses was required for any charge to be upheld in a civil or religious court. Throughout history even many saints have been excommunicated. Galileo was excommunicated during the Renaissance for his views on science, for example, but this was recently rescinded. The exclusion of many divorced and remarried Catholics has often been viewed as a concern within the Church.

Reflection for Leaders

Whenever people gather and are in relationship there is always the risk of conflict and disharmony. The challenge of the gospel is a personal one, and the restoration of relationships is paramount to our call as Christians. It may well be useful to reflect on the ways in which you resolve conflicts in the different areas of your life – family, workplace, faith community. How are things managed differently in these areas? Have you ever turned a 'blind eye' to wrong-doing? How do you react when people criticise you? Reconciliation is at the very heart of Christian living, and it is a responsibility to all who are part of the Church to be called to restore relationships with each other when these are broken. Make an effort to attend a Rite of Reconciliation this week.

Liturgy Outline

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God we are all members of your family. Help us to live in peace with each other and to treat each other with love as Jesus taught us, Amen

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 33:7-9
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 95
 If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)*

Romans 13:8-10
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL

Matthew 18:15-17

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Jesus teaches us to bring all our needs to God who loves us. So together we pray:

- That those in our Church family who have disagreements with each other will be treated with respect and dignity
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a spirit of love to shine in our lives and the way we treat each other in our families, our schools, our community
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the courage to confront injustice and sin and turn back to God
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That those who are involved in conflict in the world will find a place of peace
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of mercy and second chances, hear the prayers that we make as we try to live by your ways. We bring them to you through Jesus Christ your Son

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Twenty-Fourth Sunday In Ordinary Time

Green

Have you ever had to forgive someone when they have done something wrong to you? Sometimes it is hard to forgive others. Today Jesus tells us that if we want God to forgive us then we must first learn to forgive each other.



Gospel

Matthew 18:21-35

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Peter came up to the Lord and asked, "How many times should I forgive someone who does something wrong to me? Is seven times enough?"

Jesus answered: "Not just seven times, but seventy-seven times! This story will show you what the kingdom of heaven is like:

"One day a king decided to call in his officials and ask them to give an account of what they owed him. As he was doing this, one official was brought in who owed him fifty million silver coins. But he didn't have any money to pay what he owed. The king ordered him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all he owned, in order to pay the debt. "The official got down on his knees and began begging, 'Have pity on me, and I will pay you every cent I owe!'

The king felt sorry for him and let him go free. He even told the official that he did not have to pay back the money.

"As the official was leaving, he happened to meet another official, who owed him a hundred silver coins. So he grabbed the man by the throat. He started choking him and said, 'Pay me what you owe!' "The man got down on his knees and began begging, 'Have pity on me, and I will pay you back.' But the first official refused to have pity. Instead, he went and had the other official put in jail until he could pay what he owed. "When some other officials found out what had happened, they felt sorry for the man who had been put in jail.

"Then they told the king what had happened. The king called the first official back in and said, 'You're an evil man! When you begged for mercy, I said you did not have to pay back a cent. Don't you think you should show pity to someone else, as I did to you?' "The king was so angry that he ordered the official to be tortured until he could pay back everything he owed. That is how my Father in heaven will treat you, if you don't forgive each of my followers with all your heart."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Sirach 28:2-5, 6b-7

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF SIRACH

If you forgive your friends when they mistreat you, your prayers will be answered and your sins forgiven. If you stay angry with someone, don't expect the Lord to heal you. Don't ask God to forgive you, if you don't have pity on others. God won't forgive you, if you stay angry at someone.

So stop holding grudges and start obeying God. Think about the commands and the promise of God Most High. Then forget about the sins and the ignorance of others.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 103

Response:

The Lord is kind and merciful.

With all my heart I praise the Lord,
and with all that I am I praise his holy name!
With all my heart I praise the Lord!
I will never forget how kind he has been.

The Lord forgives our sins, heals us when we are sick,
and protects us from death.
His kindness and love are a crown on our heads.

How great is God's love for all who worship him?
Greater than the distance between heaven and earth!
How far has the Lord taken our sins from us?
Farther than the distance from east to west!

Second Reading

Romans 14:7-9

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and sisters: Whether we live or die, it must be for God, rather than for ourselves. Whether we live or die, it must be for the Lord. Alive or dead, we still belong to the Lord. This is because Christ died and rose to life, so that he would be the Lord of the dead and of the living.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle and a cross

Images from the Readings

- Must I forgive?
- cancel the debt
- forgive from the heart
- stop holding grudges
- we belong to God

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Think about this question, but don't tell us about it. Have you ever been in big trouble, maybe at school or home?

In today's story Jesus tells about a man who was in big trouble. He owed a lot of money and was let off.

What do you think about the man's behaviour?

What happened to the man at the end? (he was thrown into jail and tortured until he could repay what he owed)

Why did Jesus tell this story? (Peter wanted to know how many times he must forgive people who had hurt him. Jesus told the story to explain)

How many times did Jesus say? (seventy-seven times)

What do you think Jesus meant? (Jesus doesn't mean we have to count, he is saying we must **always** forgive)

What else does Jesus tell us about forgiving in this story? (How we forgive each other will determine how God forgives us)

Is it easy to forgive someone? Sometimes it is the hardest thing in the world to do.

Can you remember last week we talked about the special sacrament of forgiveness that we have? It is called Penance or Reconciliation. Why do we have this sacrament (it helps us to forgive and be forgiven)

What does this tell you about God?

Act of Worship

Jesus taught his friends a very special prayer which speaks of forgiving:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. **Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.** Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. Amen"

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The words on forgiveness from the first reading are underlined by the gospel today, and the second reading calls for our behaviour to be modified by our call as Christians. Many of the things Jesus taught directly opposed the norms of behaviour of the day, and of human nature in general. Today's gospel continues this call to rise above mediocrity. Forgiving someone seven times, as Peter was advocating, was a generous effort at mercy. But Jesus demands a higher standard for his followers, and illustrates it with this story of the unforgiving servant. The king forgives the impossibly enormous debt of one of his officials out of compassion, but the forgiven man refuses to match this treatment when dealing with the debt of another. He resorts to violence, and so loses the mercy that has previously been offered him. Notions of fairness are challenged as Jesus leads his listeners to the understanding that God's treatment of us correlates with our treatment of others.

Reflection for Leaders

Forgiveness always sounds very holy and pious, but when it comes to being wronged ourselves we can find that our feelings get in the way. Can you recall a time when you experienced this? How did you respond, and what happened? Were you able to forgive? When you consider this, think about how you forgive and experience forgiveness in your place of work, your home, your community. Does this story help you to move past an initial response into a place where God's mercy can be manifest towards other people? During the week, work on the things that need healing and reconciliation in your life.

Liturgy Outline

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you are kind and forgiving. Fill us with your spirit of generosity so we can share your love and mercy with others.
Amen

FIRST READING Sirach 28:2-5, 6b-7
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 103
 The Lord is kind and merciful
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Romans 14:7-9
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 18:21-35
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: We know that God loves us, so let us pray for others and ourselves:

- That people who need to know God's love and forgiveness will be welcomed by God's family, the Church
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to be generous with each other and tolerant of our differences
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the courage to let go feelings of anger and bitterness when we have been hurt or wronged by others
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For all who are hungry, or sad, lonely or sick.
Today we pray for _____
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Forgiving God, you show us your mercy every day. Listen to these prayers that we your children bring to you through Jesus Christ your Son
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**Green**

Often we call people great when they are very successful, or rich and powerful. Jesus explains that such things are not important to God. He measures our greatness by our goodness and willingness to think of other before ourselves.



Gospel

Matthew 20: 1-16a

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, 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 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 this 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 to complain 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

First Reading

Isaiah 55: 6-9

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

Turn to the LORD! He can still be found.

Call out to him. He is near

Give up your wicked ways and your evil thoughts

Return to the LORD our God.

He will be merciful and forgive all your sins.

The LORD says: “My thoughts and my ways are not like yours. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, my thoughts and my ways are higher than yours.”

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 145

Response:

The Lord is near to all who call on him

LORD, I will praise you each day and always honour your name. You are wonderful, LORD, and you deserve all praise, because you are much greater than anyone can understand

You are merciful, LORD! You are kind and patient and always loving. You are good to everyone, and you take care of all your creation

Our LORD, everything you do is kind and thoughtful, and you are near to everyone whose prayers are sincere

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle a cake to share and a chart to write on the things we have to be grateful for

Images from the Readings

- Hiring workers
- Fair payment agreement
- Why be jealous if I want to be generous?
- First will be last
- Turn to the Lord

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. When you have a cake to share out, how do you do it? Do you watch carefully to see that no one gets a bigger piece than you?

How do you determine what is fair?

Have you ever watched someone else getting treated better than the others? Has it ever been you who has been given extra? In the story today do you think the vineyard owner was fair? (those who worked all day had a whole day's pay as they had agreed upon; those who worked only a little while also got a whole day's pay. God was not unfair with the first group, but was abundantly generous with the others)

Jesus told today's story to make people think in new ways because many people in that time believed that God didn't love people who sinned. What do you think Jesus was telling them about God in this story? (that God is generous, even with people who don't deserve it, and gives gifts freely; God's love is big enough for us all to share)

What do you think Jesus was saying about how people react when God does this? (that we can often be jealous instead of pleased when we see others getting blessed)

Do we really deserve all the wonderful blessings that God gives us? What can we do when we find ourselves feeling jealous of others? What can we do this week to be more thankful for what we have and more generous?

Act of Worship

Make a list of things we have to be grateful and lay it at the prayer focus. Invite the children to say a prayer of thanksgiving in their own words.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Isaiah's words were addressed to the exiles in Babylon and follow the invitation to the Messiah's banquet. They are words of pleading to those faith has grown cold, to turn back to a forgiving God whose thoughts are far beyond our understanding. The Gospel challenges our human understanding of the principles of fairness and generosity. God does not operate on a formula of who deserves what. In this story the owner makes a point of having the last workers paid first in full view of the others. If the order of payment had been otherwise the full day workers would have gone away happy with their remuneration and none the wiser. The audience is drawn into sharing the feelings of disgruntlement in solidarity with the gull day workers. Our sense of fairness is very challenged by this story. But it sheds light onto a problem that had arisen in Matthew's community. Jewish Christians who had come to faith in Jesus early and had been persecuted for that faith, are seeing new-comers, mostly Greek converts, being offered the same reward. Jesus addresses this issue squarely – God is sovereign and his generosity extends to all believers regardless of merit.

Reflection for Leaders

This parable where the vineyard symbolises the people of God and the owner, God would be understood to be about those being gathered into God's people and welcomed into the kingdom. The challenges of this story hit us as we identify with the feelings of indignation alongside the workers. Think about the times you have experienced jealousy or resentment. What caused these emotions, and how did you deal with them? Have you ever experienced giving or receiving generosity? Is there a difference in how we react to being recipients of generosity and watching others being treated with generosity when we don't believe they deserve it? During this week think on God's gift of abundance and generosity and look for specific ways to be generous with others, with your time, your money, your attention and your attitudes.

Liturgy Outline

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you are always kind and generous. Fill us with the generosity of your love and make us more understanding with each other. Amen

FIRST READING Isaiah 55: 6-9
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 1145
 The Lord is near to all who call on him.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 20: 1-16a
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: As people filled with God's Spirit, we bring our requests to our generous God:

- That the people in God's family learn to be tolerant of others
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
 - That all those who feel jealous of others' blessings will learn to trust God for their needs to be met
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
 - For the spirit of generosity
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That our country's leaders govern us with fairness, honesty and integrity
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God your generosity goes far beyond our understanding. We bring these prayers to you, trusting them to your love and kindness, through Jesus Christ your Son.

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green



Every day of our lives we have to make choices. Sometimes we make the wrong choice and do something we shouldn't. Remember that whenever we have had a change of heart. Jesus is always ready to give us another chance to put things right.

Gospel Matthew 21: 28-32
A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus said:

"I will tell you a story about a man who had two sons. Ten you can tell me what you think.

"The father went to the older son and said,
 'God work in the vineyard today!'

His son told him that he 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 son's 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

First Reading Ezekiel 18: 25-28

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

The Lord says this: People of Israel, you say, "The Lord isn't fair!" But you are the ones who are wrong.

I am fair, and if any of you stop doing right and start sinning, you will die because of your sins. But if any of you turn from your sins and start doing right, you will be safe. You won't die because of your sins, if you really think about the things you have done wrong and turn from them.

Do this, and you will go on living.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 25

Response: **Remember your mercies, O Lord**

Show me your paths and teach me to follow; guide me by your truth and instruct me. You keep me safe, and I always trust you.

Please, LORD, remember, you have always been patient and kind. Forget each wrong I did when I was young. Show how truly kind you are and remember me.

You are honest and merciful, and you teach sinners how to follow your path. You lead humble people to do what is right and to stay on your path.

Second Reading Philippians 2:1-5

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Brothers and sisters: Christ encourages you, and his love comforts you. God's Spirit unites you, and you are concerned for others. Now make me completely happy! Live in harmony by showing love for each other.

Be united in what you think, as if you were only one person.

Don't be jealous or proud, but be humble and consider others more important than yourselves. Care about them as much as you care about yourselves and think the same way that Christ Jesus did.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a card saying 'words' and 'actions'

Images from the Readings

- Later changed his mind
- He didn't go
- Which one obeyed?
- God is fair
- Be united

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Are you always being asked to do jobs at home? Do you do them as soon as you are asked? Do you moan and do them later? Or do you say yes, promise to do it later and then forget?

Did you enjoy the story today? Which of the characters is God? (the father) Who do you think the two sons might be? (us)

Did the older son do what his father wanted?

What did the younger son do?

Why did Jesus compare the older son with the people that the chief priests called 'sinners'? (they listened to John the Baptist and realised they were wrong, so they had a change of heart and tried to do the right thing)

Why were the chief priests like the younger son? (they had also heard the message of John the Baptist but refused to admit they had made wrong choices or ask God's forgiveness)

What was the message? (even when we do not always respond immediately and in the best way, God will always give us a second chance to make things right again.)

What does this tell us about God? (God always loves us and understands that sometimes we can do better.)

Act of Worship

Dramatise the gospel story today with three children taking the major parts and another (or the leader) as the narrator.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

God's kingdom is to be governed by principles that Ezekiel recognised and in his conversation with the people he is adamant that their choice for good or evil will lead to life or death. Good choices in the past will not negate poor choices of the present. In the second reading Paul speaks of aspects of the Christian life and makes a plea for unity as the people strive to emulate Christian principles. The gospel today is set in Jerusalem, where Jesus gives another parable in response to the questioning of his authority by the chief priests. This is crisis time for Jesus' ministry and he will enter into conflict with the established religious authorities. Jesus was eliciting an answer from them about the authority of John the Baptist, who not only preached righteousness but lived it. The parable cuts the ground from under their feet. They who saw themselves as the ones with training and scriptural learning, should have known and recognised what is from God, but Jesus is inferring that they are like the second son who says 'yes' but fails to carry out God's will. It is not the conventionally religious who outwardly exhibits right talk and rituals who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who carry out God's will by their actions. Prostitutes and tax collectors are often bracketed together because they were considered 'sinners'. But these are the ones who accepted and believed in Jesus and experienced a change of heart and life.

Reflection for Leaders

Jesus' parables are always designed to challenge us to examine our own responses to God. The chief priests to whom this parable was directed were failing to recognise the reality of the situation. Have there been times when you too have been in this position? Times when you have said you were going to do something and not done it? How did you feel in breaking your promise? Have you had experiences of being pressured into agreeing to something when you would rather have said 'no'? Or failing to do something when you knew that you should act? As you consider your response to the demands that being a follower of Jesus calls you to in your day to day experiences, can you identify what were the 'no' moments of the last few days? What were the 'yes' moments? How could you consider changing your negative responses in the coming week?

Liturgy Outline

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their
Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim
God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted
to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God you give us freedom to choose how to live. Help
us choose to be your children, to choose the good way to live and
the right things to say Amen

FIRST READING Ezekiel 18: 25-28
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 25
 Remember your mercies, O Lord.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Philippians 2:1-5

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 21: 28-32
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: We have listened to God's words, and we choose to bring our needs
to our God who loves and cares for us:

- That the Church will always be a place where people who need help and support will be welcomed and cared for
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That our country's leaders make right choices they govern
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the wisdom to make right choices
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That all who have made poor choices will have the strength and courage to change their minds, and we have the generosity to allow them to
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of second chances, we bring to you our prayers for ourselves and others, knowing you will hear them in your love and kindness. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**Green**

Jesus came to share the Good News and to bring God's message to all people. He wanted them to learn how to live in the love of God and one's neighbour, and to know what mattered most in life. Many people did not listen, so Jesus told them that he would give his message to others.



Gospel

Matthew 21: 33-43

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus told the chief priests and leaders to listen to his 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 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 the grapes at harvest time."

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

"The stone that the builders tossed aside is not 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

First Reading

Isaiah 5: 1 - 7

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

I will sing a song about the vineyard of my dear friend. It was on the side of a fertile hill. My friend dug the ground, removed the stones, and planted the best vines. He built a watchtower and dug a place to press the grapes. He hoped they would be good, but bitter grapes were all that grew.

Now listen, people of Jerusalem and of Judah! You be the judge of my vineyard and me. What more could I have done for my vineyard? I hoped for good grapes, but bitter grapes were all that grew.

Now I will tell you what I am going to do. I will cut down the hedge and tear down the wall. My vineyard will be trampled and left in ruins. It will turn into a desert, neither tended nor hoed, and it will be covered with thorns and briars. I will command the clouds not to send it rain.

Israel is the vineyard of the LORD All-Powerful. Judah is the garden that makes him rejoice. He had hoped for honesty and for justice, but dishonesty and crying were all he found.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 80

Response: **The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel**

We were like grapevine you brought out of Egypt. You chased other nations away and planted us here. Its branches stretched to the sea; its new growth reached to the river.

See what's happening to this vine. With your own hands you planted its roots. LORD God All-Powerful, make us strong again! Smile on us and save us.

Second Reading

Philippians 4:6-9

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Brothers and sisters: Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts, offer up your prayers and requests to God. Then, because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel. Finally, my friends keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and proper. Don't ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise. You know the teachings I gave you, and you know what you heard me say and saw me do.

So follow my example. And God, who gives peace, will be with you.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, and a bunch of grapes

Images from the Readings

- Planted a vineyard
- They will respect my son
- The stone the builders tossed aside
- Bitter grapes grew
- God will bless you with peace

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

What do you know about vineyards? What grows there? (grapes)

Jesus explains how carefully the landowner has prepared the vineyard before he rents it out. What do you think this means?

The people Jesus was talking to would have recognised that the vineyard is an image of the kingdom of God.

So who do the characters in the story represent? (the land owner is God; his servants are the prophets; his son is Jesus; and the renters were the religious leaders who wanted to keep the vineyard for themselves)

What happened to the owner's son? (the renters killed him)

What was Jesus telling us in this story? (people should obey God's wishes and accept Jesus, God's son, into their lives)

Just as the vineyard could be taken from those who were not prepared to listen to the land owner's message, so too the kingdom of God will be taken from those who do not listen to God's message and given to others who listen and live according to God's way. How do we show that we are people who listen to God's message today?

Act of Worship

Sing a song as an act of worship today, such as "We have been told" AOB 64 or another appropriate song.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Isaiah writes an allegory for the people at a time when the northern tribes of Israel were forming an alliance against the might of Assyria, and forcing Judah to join, Judah, however, prefers its association with Assyria, and turns a deaf ear to the pleadings of the prophets for moral reform. It adds richness to today's gospel. Paul's letter to the Philippians is drawing to an end, the fear of persecution is always close – even for Paul, who urges his readers to pray and not worry. The gospel offers a blunt allegory of the blindness of those who, thought out Israel's history, have been appointed leaders of God's people. Aimed at the chief priests and scribes who do not carry out the will of God, the ones who will later cause the execution of Jesus just as the renters kill the land – owner's son. Vineyard's consistently portrayed the kingdom of God, and listeners understood the intensive long-term care that they required to be fruitful and profitable. Walled, to discourage grazing animals, well appointed, but needed, constant work pruning, thinning, supporting the vines, irrigating etc. Jesus then speaks of the most important stone that the builders have rejected. This refers to the keystone, the one at the very top of a Roman arch, which held all the other stones in place. The implication of the gospel is clear: the kingdom will be taken from those who refuse to accept God's messengers and son, and given to those who have faith in Jesus.

Reflection for Leaders

Prophets are often unpopular because they bring messages that are uncomfortable and challenging. Who are the prophets of the present age, and what are they telling us? How have we received their messages and what have we done about them? What is the message the world most needs today? The message of today's gospel too is blunt and we should reflect on how we have received it, Jesus calls himself the 'keystone' or most important stone that supports the rest of the building. What have been the 'keystones' in your life in the past and the present? What are the things which you have rejected, and why? Think about being fruitful in your life, and think about three specific ways you can be fruitful during the week.

Liturgy Outline

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God we are your children. Open our ears to hear and share your message so that others can be your children too.
Amen

FIRST READING

Isaiah 5: 1 - 7
Reader: The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 80
The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)*

Philippians 4:6-9
Reader: The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL

Matthew 21: 33-43

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: As God's children, let us come in faith and confidence to ask for the things we need:

- That the Church will continue to proclaim the message of God's love to all
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That our country's leaders will work for peace and justice as they govern our country
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the courage to hear the message of God and understand it
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For all in our community and schools who are lonely, sick and hurting, that the message of God's love will be shared with them
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Loving and merciful God, listen and answer these prayers that we make in confidence through Jesus Christ your Son

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green



God gives each one of us an invitation to join him in his heavenly kingdom and the celebration of everlasting life. We must choose whether to accept the invitation or turn away from his loving offer.

Gospel

Matthew 22:1-10

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus told 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 some of 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 to 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

First Reading

Isaiah 25:6-10a

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

On this mountain the LORD All-Powerful will prepare for all nations a feast of the finest foods. Choice wines and the best meat will be served. Here the LORD will strip away the funeral clothes that cover the nations. The LORD ALL-Powerful will destroy the power of death and wipe away each tear. No longer will his people be embarrassed everywhere. The LORD has spoken!

On that day, people will say,

“The LORD God has saved us!

Let’s celebrate.

We waited and waited, and now he is here.”

The powerful arm of the LORD will protect this mountain

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 23

Response: **I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life**

You, LORD, are my shepherd. I will never be in need. You let me rest in fields of green grass. You lead me to streams of peaceful water, and you refresh my life.

I may walk through valleys as dark as death, but I won’t be afraid. You are with me. You treat me to a feast, and you honour me as your guest.

Your kindness and love will always be with me each day of my life, and I will live forever in your house, LORD

Second Reading

Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20

A READING FROM THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Brothers and sisters:

I know what it is to be poor or to have plenty, and I have lived under all kinds of conditions. I know what it means to be full or to be hungry, to have too much or too little. Christ give me the strength to face anything.

It was good of you to help me when I was having such a hard time.

I pray that God will take care of all your needs with the wonderful blessings that come from Christ Jesus! May God our Father be praised forever and ever.

Amen.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, and a party or wedding invitation

Images from the Readings

- Come to the banquet!
- Invited guests don't deserve to come
- They brought in everyone
- Wipe away each tear
- Strength the face anything

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Can you remember your favourite birthday party? Did you help get things ready? Was it lots of work?

Imagine how you would feel if, after all that effort, the friends you invited didn't turn up?

Jesus tells us this story today about a wedding banquet that the invited guests weren't interested in. A banquet is a big feast. In Jesus' day a wedding celebration went on for as long as a week. You would need to do a lot of work to prepare a banquet for all your guests for that long.

How did the king feel when the guests didn't turn up? (furious)

What did he do?

What do you think Jesus meant when we told this story? (Jesus want us all to be with him and celebrate together. There is a place in heaven for each on of us.)

How do we show that we want to celebrate with Jesus? (one way is to celebrate together at Mass.)

How happy are we to come along?

Act of Worship

Sing a song of invitation, such as 'Come as you are' AOV 1:31, or of acceptance, such as, "Here I am, Lord" AOV 1:90

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Isaiah records a Messianic banquet for all nations, a time when we will all sit together at God's table, a God of love and great love and compassion. In the second reading Paul speaks of his contentment in the face of hardships and his sureness of God future provision for his friends. Roman prisons the day were not renowned for their amenities and Paul had been treated quite harshly by his enemies, yet despite this his spiritual strength was a great encouragement to his supporters in Philippi. The wedding banquet is a commonly used image for the kingdom of God in both the Hebrew and the Christian traditions. The feast symbolises abundance provided by God for all who accept the invitation, Jewish wedding celebrations having often lasted as long as a week. The time commitment by the invited guests for such a lengthy participation makes their refusal a little easier to understand, and their response to kill the messengers' echoes last weeks' gospel. The reaction of the king was rather extreme, but does not make a point about the invitation issued by God being matched by our free response. This gospel completes the story of the Messianic banquet from the first reading. But where that was open to all, this wedding banquet of today's gospel is only extended to all once the elect have lost their chance to participate. The reference to the street corners indicates the places where people traditionally gathered and worshipped.

Reflection for Leaders

The wedding feast and the symbolism of the meal are significant for Christians because of the Eucharistic connotations. The meal of bread and wine that Jesus shared with his disciples, and which we share in the Eucharist, is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet where there will be an abundance for all who accept the invitation. Recall instances when you have refused invitations and the excuses you have used to avoid going somewhere you didn't want to. What excuses do you make today for not doing things that you ought to do? Can you identify what invitation God extends to you today? What sort of commitment is required for your acceptance? What are the things, which prevent you from responding fully to this invitation? Be aware this week of how you respond to invitations.

Liturgy Outline

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you offer your kingdom of heaven to each of us.
Help us to do things your way so that we can share eternity with you.
Amen

FIRST READING Isaiah 25:6-10a
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 23
 I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 22:1-10
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Let us bring our prayers to the God of glory, who invites us to come and be blessed with every good gift.

- That the Church offers an invitation and a welcome to all people
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the gift of hospitality
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the generosity to respond willingly to what God invites us to do
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For all those in our schools and parish communities who are sick or lonely or who need to know God's love
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Good and gracious God, we come together as your children. Look upon us with kindness answer these prayers we offer for ourselves and others through Jesus Christ your Son
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

Everything we have was given to us by God, who gives us love with unending generosity. How often do we remember to say "thank you" or to return just a little of what we have been given?



Gospel

Matthew 22:15 – 21

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 show offs!

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

First Reading

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

The LORD said to Cyrus, his chosen one, "I have taken hold of your right hand to help conquer nations and remove kings from power. City gates will open for you. Not one will stay closed.

"Cyrus, you don't even know me! But I have called you by name and highly honoured you, because of Jacob, my servant, and Israel, my chosen one. Only I am the LORD!

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 96

Response:

Give the Lord glory and honour

Sing a new song to the LORD! Everyone on this earth, sing praises to the LORD. Tell every nation on earth, "The LORD is wonderful and does marvellous things!"

"The LORD is great and deserves our greatest praise! He is the only God worthy of our worship. Other nations worship idols, but the LORD created the heavens."

"Everyone on earth, now tremble and worship the LORD, majestic and holy." Announce to the nations, "the LORD is King! God will judge the people with fairness."

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

From Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

To the church in Thessalonica: the people of God the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray that God will be kind to you and will bless you with peace!

We thank God for you and always mention you in our prayers. Each time we pray we tell God our Father about your faith and loving work and about your firm hope in our Lord Jesus Christ

My dear friends, God loves you, and we know he has chosen you to be his people. When we told you the good news, it was with the power and assurance that come from the Holy Spirit, and not simply with words.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, some coins in a purse

Images from the Readings

- Planned how to trick Jesus
- You show offs!
- Give God what belongs to God
- I have called you by name
- You are chosen

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Has anyone ever tricked you? Sometimes tricks are fun, like when we watch someone doing card tricks. But sometimes tricks are nasty.

In today's story the Pharisees were trying to trick Jesus. It was nasty. Why were they doing this?? (they wanted to get Jesus into trouble with his answer so he could be arrested)

Why did they want to do that? (they were jealous of him)

What do you think they expected Jesus to say? (If he said that people shouldn't pay taxes he would be in trouble with the Emperor; if he said they should he would be unpopular with the people who were crippled with harsh taxes) Do you know what taxes are?

Do you think Jesus gave a good answer?

Whose face is on our coins? (show coins – Queen Elizabeth II)

Sometimes, just like the Pharisees, we feel jealous of others. Do you think Jesus wants us to get them into trouble if we feel that way?

What does Jesus want us to give to God instead of money?

What are the things we should thank God for?

How do we thank and praise God? (in our attitude, with prayer, singing, Psalms of praise)

Act of Worship

Choose a children's version of a psalm of praise (eg 103 or 104) and pray as an echo verse

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Isaiah was among the exiles during the captivity in Babylon. He never lost hope of his country's restoration, and sees Cyrus the Persian as his people's liberator when he overran Babylon in 538BC. Thessalonica, capital of Macedonia, was an important centre of trade. This letter was probably the first book of the New Testament to be written. Its purpose was to allay misplaced fears for those who had died before the second coming. This excerpt shows Paul's great affection for his converts. Affection was not featured in the gospel. The Pharisees, strict legalists, were devious in their plan to trap Jesus. Given the political and religious situation of the time, the question posed by the Pharisees offered a no-win scenario. The people had to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor as well as a temple tax. Had Jesus answered 'yes', he could have been accused of betraying his own religious duty. A 'no' would be treason – inciting others to not pay taxes was sedition. Jesus' answer makes clear that there are obligations to the government for any citizen, but there are also obligations to God. Whereas the coin bears the image of the Emperor and so belongs to him, the whole of creation displays the imprint of God. Civil authority must be recognised but the first loyalty of all creation is to God.

Reflection for Leaders

As you reflect on the readings today, think about the obligations that you have towards God and towards the State. We live in an increasingly secular society, where faith in God is often viewed as irrelevant and unnecessary. For many of us, there are increasing difficulties in living lives which balance our obligations to God and to society. Can you think of ways that you might be able to improve the integration of these aspects of your life? What are the things that belong to God? How easy do you find it giving back to God what belongs to God? In what ways do you do this? Can you identify trends in the world today that might benefit from having gospel values applied to them? How might you actively promote some of these values?

During the coming week, consider carefully the response that Jesus would have towards issues that come up with regard to political, economic or current events in your neighbourhood.

Liturgy Outline

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

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To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, king of all creation and all things belong to you. Give us the grace and strength to stay close to you always, so that our lives give honour and praise to you.

FIRST READING Isaiah 45:1, 4-6
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 96
 Give the Lord glory and honour
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 22:15 – 21
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

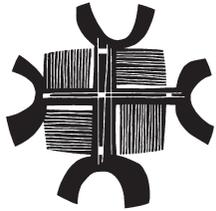
Leader: God has called us by name. We now bring all our needs in confidence, because God loves and cares for us.

- That God's goodness will always be a source of wisdom for all God's family, they Church
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the grace to treat all people with honesty and fair play
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That all those who have been touched by war and conflict in our world will know the peace of God
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For our family member who have died, that they will remain in God's love forever
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Creator God, all things belong to you. Give your forgiveness and peace to those we remember today, through Jesus Christ your son
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings
Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

Living Love - Jesus taught us to love God and to love each other more than anything else in our lives.

Gospel

Matthew 22:34-40

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 is it, '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

First Reading

1 Thessalonians 1:5-8a

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

Brothers and sisters:

When we told you the good news, it was with the power and assurance that come from the Holy Spirit, and not simply with words.

You knew what kind of people we were and how we helped you. So, when you accepted the message, you followed our example and the example of the Lord. You suffered, but the Holy Spirit made you glad.

You became an example for all the Lord's followers in Macedonia and Achaia and because you, the Lord's message has spread everywhere in those regions.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 18

Response:

I love you, Lord, my strength

I love you, LORD god, and you make me strong. You are my mighty rock, my fortress, my protector, the rock where I am safe, my shield, my powerful weapon, and my place of shelter.

You are the living LORD! I will praise you. You are a mighty rock. I will honour you for keeping me safe. Your faithful love for David will never end.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a chart with 1 Cor 13:4-8

Images from the Readings

- Most important commandment?
- Love God first
- Love others
- All Law based on these
- An example for all the Lord's followers

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Has your teacher or your parents ever given you a list of things to do that is so long and complicated that you don't know where to start? It can feel overwhelming when you have too much to remember. When Jesus grew up he had to learn a great long list of rules, called the Law of Moses, which had to be followed to please God. Our church has a list of rules too. Do you know what it is called? (the ten commandments)

The church leaders in Jesus' time were called the Sadducees and the Pharisees. These complicated rules were very important to them, and they expected everyone to keep them perfectly. They wanted to test Jesus by asking him which rule was the most important. Do you remember what Jesus said? (Love God first with every bit of yourself, and love others as much as you love yourself)

Jesus' answer covered everything! Was it a good answer?

What do you think Jesus means when he says 'love'?

What did Jesus want us to learn by his answer? (Love grows when we share it, and when we love others we also show love for God)

Can you think of ways that we can put these words into action?

(look for specific examples that the children might be able to do)

Act of Worship

Read 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8 with the children echoing each line.

"Love never hurries, it is always kind. It is not jealous and never boasts of its greatness. Love is not rude or selfish. It is always ready to forgive and forget mistakes we make. Love is no friend of wickedness but delights in honesty and truth. Love is strong and never gives up. It never loses its trust in God or its hope for the future. Love will survive all things because it is everlasting."

Background to the Readings for Leaders

In our first reading today, Paul thanks God for the spiritual development he sees in his converts in Thessalonica in the northern Roman province. They are proof that this preaching has been effective. Despite persecution they are filled with Christian joy, which has made them an example to others. Matthew's gospel records an encounter between Jesus and the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The Sadducees were a wealthy sect of Jews consisting of a priestly aristocracy. They denied belief in resurrection and angels. This is the final encounter between Jesus and his enemies recorded by Matthew. The Pharisees and Sadducees are trying to expose Jesus' lack of professional knowledge of Scripture to trap him into giving more importance to one commandment over the others. It is possible that some scribes were recognising that some commandments were more important than others, and may have been looking for a simplification of the Law. Jesus' answer does in fact originate in Deut 6: 4 – 9 and Lev 19:18, so it was already present in Jewish Law. But Jesus brought both these passages into conjunction – a principle and its application. Jesus himself is an example of this personified – Son of God and Son of Man, Jesus embodies this dual commandment of love. This is the example that Christians must emulate.

Reflection for Leaders

Jesus' words sought to align our response to God with our attitude towards people. It is not possible to love God and despise people. Both are needed to fulfil our faith for it to be authentic. Which of these two parts of Jesus' great commandment do you find most easy to do – is it easier for you to love God and ignore those around you, or are you drawn to people but find it difficult to be attentive to God? Creating balance in our lives requires continual effort. In what ways do you achieve and maintain this balance? Reflect on how you have experienced God's love and how you have extended it to others. Look for opportunities this week to do this.

Liturgy Outline

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
 Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, your love is freely given to all people. May the light of your kindness shine through us as we share your love with others. Amen

FIRST READING 1 Thessalonians 1: 5 – 8a

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 18

I love you, Lord, my strength
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 22:34-40

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: We have listened to gospel and come in faith to our God with our prayers and our needs.

- That love for God and others is always the motivating factor in the way God's family, the Church, lives its faith
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the light of love shines through us and touches the lives of all we meet
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a greater understanding of God's love in our world today
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For all those who are sick, lonely or in need, that we will share our time and love with them
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God, your loving kindness was shown to us through Jesus. Look kindly on us and those for whom we pray today through Jesus Christ your Son

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time**Green**

The Pharisees were the leaders of the Jewish people. They studied the scriptures and were very proud that they obeyed the Jewish law. The ordinary people looked to the Pharisees for good example, but Jesus told his followers that they did not practice what they preached.



Gospel

Matthew 23:1-12

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples:

“The Pharisees and the teachers of Law 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 sister. 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 you 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 honoured.”

The gospel of the Lord.

First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF MALACHI

The LORD says this:

Although I am the LORD All-Powerful, you priests have turned from following me. Your teachings have led many people to do sinful things, and you have broken the promise that Levi made to me.

So, I made everyone hate and despise you because you disobeyed me and did not treat all people alike.

Don’t you know that we all have the same father?

Didn’t the one God create us all?

So why do you cheat each other by breaking the promise that your ancestors made?

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 18

Response:

Teach me your ways, O Lord

Show me your paths and teach me to follow; guide me by your truth and instruct me. You keep me safe.

Please, LORD, remember, you have always been patient and kind. Show how truly kind you are and remember me.

You are honest and merciful, and you teach sinners how to follow your path. You lead humble people to do what is right and to stay on your path.

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 2:7-9,13

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

Brothers and sisters:

We could have demanded help from you. After all, Christ is the one who sent us. We chose to be like children or like a mother nursing her baby. We cared so much for you, and you became so dear to us, that we were willing to give our lives for you when we gave you God’s message.

My dear friends, you surely haven’t forgotten our hard work and hardships. You remember how night and day we struggled to make a living so that we could tell you God’s message without being a burden to anyone.

We always thank God that you believed the message we preached. It came from him, and it is not something made up by humans. You accepted it as God’s message, and now he is working in you.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle

Images from the Readings

- Don't do as they do
- Won't lift a finger to help
- Be servant of others
- Your teachings have led many to sin
- Like a mother nursing her baby

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. What sort of 'leaders' do you know? (Guide/Scout leaders, sport team leaders etc)

What sort of things do your leader tell you to do? What makes a good leader? What does Jesus say about the Jewish leader of his time? (they did not practice what they preached)

When Jesus says a good leader should be a servant of others, what did he mean? (if we want to share his love with others we need to do what we say and show love by our actions)

How did Jesus show he was a servant to others? (washed disciples feet etc) Are there times when we get really bossy, tell others how to behave and then act differently ourselves?

How can we serve others and live the way Jesus tells us to?

Act of Worship

Sing 'The Servant Song' (AOV 2:169) together.

Or pray a litany of sorrow:

When we make mistakes and wrong choices

Lord, have mercy

When we forget to share your love with others

Christ, have mercy

When we have spoiled our friendship with you

Lord, have mercy

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament, but not the latest. The Jews had returned from exile, the Temple had been rebuilt, but all was not well. The priests showed indifference to the problems besetting the people, and lacked reverence for God. Paul's letter to the Thessalonians continues showing his affection for his readers. He recalls how when he lived among them he worked at his profession of tent making so that he would not be a financial burden on them, and he expresses gratitude for the way they accepted his preaching. Over the past few weeks Matthew has recounted the numerous times the Jewish leaders had attempted to entrap Jesus, who always seems equal to the challenge. Matthew writes to a predominantly Jewish Christian community. Those who had come from positions of leadership in the Jewish faith would have understood that Christian leadership would be along a very different model. There would one Master in heaven, and one teacher, Jesus Christ. Real leadership within the community must be based on leadership of service. Jesus accuses the Jewish leaders of hypocrisy because they flashed their piety and preached what they did not practice. They used traditional prayer shawls, with fringed edges and long tassels at each corner and phylacteries – small leather boxes containing texts from Scripture, tied with long black straps to their foreheads and the upper left arm signifying acceptance of God's law and its dominance over both mind and body.

Reflection for Leaders

The best teachers are those who embody what is it they are teaching. Can you recall a teacher like this who inspired you by living what they taught? Who has been the most inspiring teacher of your adult life? Are there aspects of the way the Church operates, which contradict the teaching of Jesus? What are the ways you exercise leadership within your family, your workplace and within your community? In which ways do you serve others? How responsive are you to people in need? We are said to be a country with 'tall poppy syndrome'. In what ways do we reject people who stand out from the crowd? During the week try to exercise a leadership of service towards others in your home or workplace.

Liturgy Outline

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you sent Jesus to show us how we should treat each other. Help our actions speak of your love so that others may believe in you. Amen

FIRST READING Malachi 2:8-10
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 18
 Teach me your ways, Lord.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9,13
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 23:1-12
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: May we bring all our needs and prayers to our God who loves and cares for us

- That those in leadership roles in our Church serve each other with love just as Jesus showed us
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That God's compassion will be a comfort for all who are hurting in our community, our schools, our families
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a spirit of humility in all who serve and lead others
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For all those who have died, that God's goodness and mercy will bring everlasting life
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Loving God, you invite us to bring all our needs to you. Listen to the prayers of your children, which we bring to you through Jesus Christ your Son
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green



It is easy to be ready for something to happen when we know the day and time to expect it. Today Jesus explains that we must always be ready for his return, even though no one knows when he will be coming.

Gospel

Matthew 25:1-13

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 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! God 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

First Reading

Wisdom 6:12-16

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF WISDOM

The LORD says this: Wisdom shines brightly, and she is easily seen by all who love her and search for her.

Wisdom hurries to meet everyone who wants to be wise. If you get up early and search, you will easily find her at your front door.

Keep your mind on Wisdom, and you will be very wise. Keep thinking about her, and all of your worries will soon disappear.

Wisdom goes around searching for those who deserve her. She meets them along the road and stays in their thoughts.

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 63

Response: **My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God**

You are my God. I worship you. In my heart, I long for you. As I would long for a stream in a scorching desert

I have seen your power and your glory in the place of worship. Your love means more than life to me, and so I praise you.

I think about you before I go to sleep, and my thoughts turn to you during the night. You have helped me, and I sing happy songs in the shadow of your wings.

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

Brothers and sisters:

My friends, we want you to understand how it will be for those followers who have already died. Then you won’t grieve over them and be like people who don’t have any hope.

We believe that Jesus died and was raised to life. We also believe that when God brings Jesus back again, he will bring with him all who had faith in Jesus before they died. Our Lord Jesus told us that when he comes, we won’t go up to meet him ahead of his followers who have already died will be raised to life.

Next, all of us who are still alive will be taken up into the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the sky. From that time on we will all be with the Lord forever.

Encourage each other with these words.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a list of deceased relatives and friends

Images from the Readings

- Ten girls took their lamps
- Come to meet him!
- Our lamps are going out
- Always be ready!
- The Lord will return from heaven

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Have you ever had to be ready for something very important, and then found that you didn't have something that you really needed?

Maybe you couldn't find your rugby boots, or your dancing shoes, or perhaps the batteries in your torch were flat.

When there were weddings in the time that Jesus lived, the bridegroom would come to the house of the bride's parents and take her to his house where the wedding feast would take place. Often the bridesmaids would go with the groom to collect the bride and then return to the celebrations. They had to have enough oil in their lamps to get to the bride's house and back safely. What do you think Jesus was trying to tell us with this story? (we must always be ready, even when we aren't sure exactly when we need to be)

Why were some of the girls were foolish and some wise?

What did Jesus say at the end of the story? (always be ready!)

What do we need to be ready for? (Jesus will return again)

How can we keep ourselves ready for when Jesus returns? (Do as Jesus taught us, live each day as well as we can, make it our best)

Act of Worship

"God, our Father, we pray for all our relatives and friends who have died. Help them and give them our love as we look forward to the time when we will all be happy together with you forever in heaven. Amen"

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The book of Wisdom, written about 100 BC explores the qualities of wisdom, an agent of creation, breath of the power of God. This reading declares how readily Wisdom may be found. In the second reading, Paul speaks of the return of the Lord that was so intensely anticipated by the early church. There was concern among the community that in the interim some of their members had died, and Paul was giving assurance that their fears were unfounded. In doing so he adds to the theology of eternal life. The theme of the Christ's second coming is echoed in today's gospel. The public ministry of Jesus is drawing to a close and Matthew exhorts his community to be prepared for this event. Jesus' victory over death through his resurrection had begun something that would be completed only with his return in glory. The parable of the ten bridesmaids paints a word picture that the people would be familiar with as they understood the message to be prepared. The fact that the girl slept as they waited for the bridegroom, the issue was they all slept. However, five brought additional oil. Had they shared their supply with the five who were not as prepared, then no-one would have had enough to accompany the groom. Oil is traditionally symbolic of the Holy Spirit. This is a clear warning that we each need to be personally ready for Jesus return, lest the door be closed against us for eternity.

Reflection for Leaders

Once again we have the imagery of the wedding banquet to which all are invited. But only those who live with an attitude of openness and readiness will be allowed inside. This parable stresses the need to live in the present with an eye to the future. Recall a time when you have had to invest a lot of time and energy into preparation for an event. Did this effort pay off? Can you also recall an occasion when you have neglected to do preparation that was necessary. What happened, and how did you feel during this occasion? No matter how well we plan, the unexpected will often crop up to throw all our efforts. Sometimes the unexpected can bring better things than we could have imagined. Do you find it easy to deal with the unexpected in your life? How well do you balance the spiritual and the practical aspects of your life? Think about the priorities in your life during this week and evaluate whether they need to be adjusted.

Liturgy Outline

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, we know that one day you will send Jesus back to us. Help us to be ready to be with you for all time.

FIRST READING Wisdom 6:12-16
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 63
 My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 25:1-13
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: We have listened to God's word, and know that we can bring our prayers to our God who loves us.

- That the love and peace of God will fill all those who serve the Church
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the rulers of our nation, communities and schools will lead with wisdom and readiness
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the abundant healing of God will come to the sick, and compassion to all those who care for them
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For all those who have died, that the eternal happiness of God will be their treasure for ever
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Loving God, our needs are great, but your love for us and all people is even greater. Hear and answer these prayers that we bring to you through Jesus Christ our Lord
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**Green**

When we love someone, we sometimes give them a gift, something special for them to use and enjoy. God has given talents to each one of us as a sign of his love; these are gifts from God.



Gospel

Matthew 25: 14-15, 19-21

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

First Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

Brothers and sisters:

I don't need to write you about the time or date when all this will happen. You surely know that the Lord's return will be as a thief coming at night. People will think they are safe and secure. But destruction will suddenly strike them like the pains of a woman about to give birth. And they won't escape.

My dear friends, you don't live in darkness, and so that day won't surprise you like a thief. All of you belong to the light and live in the day. We don't live in the night or belong to the dark. Others may sleep, but we should stay awake and be alert.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 63

Response: **The Lord is my Light and my Salvation**

You, LORD, are the light that keeps me safe. I am not afraid of anyone. You protect me, and I have no fears.

LORD, I know I will live to see how kind you are. Trust the LORD! Be brave and strong and trust the LORD.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a bowl and a chocolate coin for each child.

Images from the Readings

- Put his servants in charge
- I will put you in charge of much more
- Come and share my happiness
- People think they are safe
- Stay awake and be alert

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

In today's gospel Jesus talks about thousands of coins that three servants were given. One of the servants earned as much money again. Do you know what this is called? (investigating)

Was the owner pleased? What did he say to his servant?

Do you think Jesus is really just talking about money? What do you think he might have meant? (gifts, talents)

Do you have a special gift or talent? (eg a good reader, good at sport, a willing helper, someone who encourages others etc)

What is your gift? _____

Does everyone have the same gift? Why not? (we need each other so that when we work together everyone benefits)

What do you think is the message of Jesus' story? What does this story tell us about God? What does Jesus praise, having the talent or using the talent?

Jesus wants us to understand that we should use our talents wisely.

What does this mean? How can we use the gifts that we have?

(whenever we share our gifts with anyone, even just a small thing, God is pleased)

Act of Worship

Each child is to place a chocolate coin in a bowl to symbolise using our gifts together for God. (At the end of the liturgy coins could be distributed to children to eat.)

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Our first reading follows directly from last week's letter to the Thessalonians where the second coming of Jesus was being detailed. This passage explores two examples of suddenness – a thief in the night and the onset of labour pains. When the hour comes it will be too late to prepare. Advice on what to do in the waiting time is given. Matthew also is giving instruction to the early Church in Christian living in the in-between time, the time of waiting for the return of Jesus. The absentee landowner has given his servants a fortune and on his return they must show that they had followed instructions and invested wisely. By contrast the Jews, who were repositories of God's treasure, had done nothing with it. The coin referred to, a Jewish talent, contained more than 43,000g of silver, a substantial sum of money which at that time would have bought an ox. Absentee landlords were common in Jesus' time. The coins in the story were not equally distributed. We are each endowed with different 'talents' so that we can work together generously and share our abilities. With his story Jesus would have challenged the images that his hearers may have had about just how 'exacting' God was considered. We each have a responsibility for every one of our gifts – to use them rightly is to share in the joy of God's kingdom.

Reflection for Leaders

It is always a temptation to look at other people's talents and gifts and consider them of more value than our own. But today's gospel challenges us to reflect on the God-given gifts that we have, and perhaps not value much, and to use them wisely, generously, and for the benefit of others. Jesus, after all, praised the servants for using their talents not just for having them. Can you name your gifts and talents? How do you use them? It is often the little things that we do for each other that mean the most, and we often overlook some of our most basic gifts. We are also challenged to re-examine our image of God, as Jesus was challenging his listeners. Do we see God as shepherd, judge, father, mother, rock, king?

Does our image of God match what Scripture tells us? How might our image of God influence that way we respond to the invitation to enter the kingdom? During the week make an effort to use your talents specifically to bless others.

Liturgy Outline

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
 Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, every good gift we have comes through your generosity. Help us to use them wisely for the good of others and to honour you. Amen

FIRST READING 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6
 Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 27
 The Lord is my light and my salvation
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 25: 14-15, 19-21
 Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Let us call upon our God, giver of gifts and giver of life, who is near to us in every need.

- That all who serve God's family, the Church, use their gifts wisely and generously to help all who need it
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That those who are poor and ill will find great comfort from the care of others
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to appreciate our gifts and those of the people around us, so that we can learn to work together
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For peace in our homes, our schools, our community
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God, giver of all that is good, we thank you for all that you have given us. We ask that you hear the prayers that we make to you through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Christ the King

White



Today is the last Sunday of the church's year, the feast of Christ the King. As the year draws to an end, we turn out thoughts to the time when Christ will return as king.

Gospel Matthew 25:31-46
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 their goats.

"He will place the sheep 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.'

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading Ezekiel 34:11-12, 14-16abce
A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

The LORD says this:

"I, the LORD God, will look for my people and take care of them myself. As a shepherd looks for sheep that have wandered away, I will search for my scattered people. I will rescue them from all the places where they went on that dark and gloomy day.

My people will be like sheep grazing and resting in good pastures and on Israel's mountains. I, the LORD All-Powerful, will lead them there and watch over them.

"I will look for the lost sheep and bring back the ones that have wandered off. If any are hurt, I will bandage their wounds. If any are weak, I will help them. I will take good care of my people!"

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 23
 Response: **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

You, LORD, are my shepherd; I will never be in need. You let me rest in fields of green grass.

You lead me to streams of peaceful water, and you refresh my life. You are true to your name, and you lead me along the right paths.

You treat me to a feast, while my enemies watch. You honour me as your guest, and you fill my cup until it overflows. Your kindness and love will always be with me each day of my life, and I will live forever in your house, LORD.

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 15:20-24a
A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brothers and sisters:

Christ has been raised to life! And he makes us certain that others will also be raised to life. Just as we will die because of Adam, we will be raised to life because of Christ. Adam brought death to all of us, and Christ will bring life to all of us,

But we must each wait our turn. Christ was the first to be raised to life, and his people will be raised to life when he returns. Then after Christ has destroyed all powers and forces, the end will come.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a picture of a Good Shepherd

Images from the Readings

- Sit on his royal throne
- Separate the people of all nations
- You did it for me
- I will take good care of my people
- Christ will bring life to all

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Today is a special feast in the church year. Do you know what it is? (It is the end of the church year when we celebrate Christ the King)

How do we show that it is special? (there may be a procession, white or gold vestments etc)

What does 'Christ the King' mean? (Jesus will come back at the end of time to judge all people. He will sort out the good from the bad) Jesus tells us to in the gospel today of the sort of things he wants us to do for each other. Can you remember what these things were? (feed and clothe the hungry and needy, care for the sick, welcome strangers, visit those in jail) This gospel sums up the message that Jesus has brought to us week after week. Jesus wants us to be loving and caring towards each other. Are there still people in the world today who are hungry, thirsty or need our help? How can we help them? (we could contribute to groups such as St Vincent de Paul, Lovelink, caring groups, Catholic Caring Foundation, Caritas, food banks etc.) Jesus said ' whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me' How do you think children might be able to do this? (eg welcome new pupils at school, helping people who are hurt, gold coin donations)

We can't be good all the time, but we can try to ensure that our loving actions outweigh our unloving ones.

Act of Worship

Sing a version of the Gloria, or a shepherd song that the children might know.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The reading from Ezekiel contains prophecies that deal with the redemption of God's people who are in exile in Babylon. Ezekiel considers rulers who have misused their power. God himself will be the shepherd of his people and explains specifically what this means. In the letter to the Corinthians, Paul deals with the question of resurrection. Paul contrasts Adam and Jesus, declares that the faithful departed will be brought to life in Christ who was the first to be raised to life. Matthew's gospel ties the theme of shepherding in with a beautiful climax to the mission of Jesus. He will return in glory to gather his people from all the nations of the world. Just as in Middle Eastern flocks sheep and goats were mixed, so are people in our time thrown together in a mix of good and bad. Matthew sets out the principles of judgment and clearly indicates the fate of each group. Being a shepherd in ancient times was seen as a lowly occupation. Mostly they were hired hands that felt no responsibility for the sheep. Jesus refers to himself as the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep and care for them with authority and care.

Reflection for Leaders

During the past weeks we have exhorted to be prepared, to be alert and use our gifts well. Today we get the bottom line. We are to be judged worthy of a place in God's kingdom. What counts is how we have served those in need, how we have recognised Christ in each other. How do you respond to those in need? Can you recall an experience of having someone respond to a need of your own? Did it change your attitude to helping others? The Church has always worked in areas of social justice and help for the poor, the needy and the sick. How does your faith community engage in these areas of service? Are there ways that you and your family might become more involved? Does your faith express itself in practical ways? During the week seek out someone in need and reach out to them with a loving action.

Liturgy Outline

Christ the King

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: God of heaven and earth, you have set Jesus Christ as King of the Universe. Help us to always give you praise and glory as you watch over us and guide us.

FIRST READING Ezekiel 34:11-12, 14-16abce

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* 1 Corinthians 15:20-24a

Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 25:31-46

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: With confidence and hope let us bring our prayers to the God of glory

- For all those who shepherd the people of God
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That all God's family, the church, had the courage to reach out to help the most unimportant of people in need
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the love of God will be felt through the actions we share with the people around us
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For all those who have died, that they will be raised with Jesus when he comes in glory
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Shepherding God, you care for all of us as, even the most insignificant of us. Grant us all that we, your children, have asked for through Jesus Christ our Lord, Universal King

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.



SOLEMNITIES & FEASTS

Readings

Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul

Red



This Sunday we celebrate the special feast of Saints Peter and Paul. It was through them that the Church first received the faith, by Peter's witness and Paul's preaching. Together they were the greatest leaders of the early Church.

Gospel

Matthew 16:13-19

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

When Jesus and his disciples were near the town of Caesarea Philippi, he asked them, "What do people say about the Son of Man?"

The disciples answered, "some people say you are John the Baptist or maybe Elijah or Jeremiah or some other prophet."

Then Jesus asked them, "But who do you say I am?"

Simon Peter spoke up, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Jesus told him: "Simon, son of Johan, you are blessed! You didn't discover this on your own. It was shown to you by my Father in heaven. So I will call you Peter, which means 'a rock.' On this rock I will build my Church, and death itself will not have any power over it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and God in heaven will allow whatever you allow on earth. But he will not allow anything that you don't allow."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Acts 12:1-11

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

King Herod caused terrible suffering for some members of the church. He ordered soldiers to cut off the head of James, the brother of John. When Herod saw that this pleased the Jewish people, he had Peter arrested during the Feast of Thin Bread. He put Peter in jail and ordered four squads of soldiers to guard him. Herod planned to put him on trial in public after the feast.

While Peter was being kept in jail, the church never stopped praying to God for him.

The night before Peter was to be put on trial, he was asleep and bound by two chains. A soldier was guarding him on each side, and two other soldiers were guarding the entrance to the jail. Suddenly an angel from the Lord appeared, and light flashed around in the cell. The angel poked Peter in the side and woke him up. Then he said, "Quick! Get up!"

The chains fell off his hands, and the angel said, "get dressed and put on your sandals." Peter did what he was told. Then the angel said, "Now put on your coat and follow me." Peter left with the angel, but he thought everything was only a dream. They went past the two groups of soldiers, and when they came to the iron gate to the city, it opened by itself. They went out and were going along the street, when all at once the angel disappeared.

Peter now realised what had happened, and he said, "I am certain that the Lord sent his angel to rescue me from Herod and from everything the Jewish leaders planned to do to me."

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 34

Response:

The Lord set me free from all my fears

Honour the Lord with me! Celebrate his great name.

I asked the Lord for help, and he saved me from all my fears

Keep your eyes on the Lord!

You will shine like the sun and never blush with shame.

I was a nobody, but I prayed, and the Lord saved me from all my troubles.

If you honour the Lord, his angel will protect you.

Discover for yourself that the Lord is kind.

Come to him for protection, and you will be glad.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Red cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a statue or an image of St Peter and St Paul.

Images from the Readings

- Honour the Lord
- His angel will protect you
- On this rock I will build my Church
- Keys to the kingdom of heaven

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. It is a good opportunity this week to teach about St Peter and St Paul, their lives and their example. You may like to use some of the following questions.

Before Peter became a great leader in the Church what did he do? (He was a fisherman). Did Peter always do the right thing? (No - sometimes he made mistakes - Peter's faith failed him after he began to walk on the water, he denied Jesus three times before Jesus was put to trial). What does this tell us about who God chooses to use to achieve great things for him.... He doesn't always choose people powerful by human standards, nor does he choose perfect people who've never done anything wrong (we've all made mistakes) but he does choose people who truly desire to do the will of God and he gives these people all they need.

Who knows what St Paul did before he became an apostle? (He was a religious leader who hated the Christians and persecuted them). What was it that made Paul change his life so drastically? (If the children are unfamiliar with the story of Paul's conversion recount it briefly now). What does this tell us about how God treats those who have done serious wrong? (He is willing to forgive anyone who is sorry for what they have done wrong and he will even lead them on to do great things for him).

We may never be great and powerful by the world's standards, we might never become the Prime Minister, or the boss of a big company, but if we listen to God and do what he asks, we, like St Peter and St Paul can achieve great things for God. Without St Peter and St Paul the Church never would have grown as it has, maybe one day you will be a leader in the Church or take the message of Jesus to people in foreign lands like St Peter and St Paul.

Act of Worship

Ask the children to write a prayer asking St Peter or St Paul to pray for a special intention. eg St Peter please pray for my Mum that she will get better soon. Encourage them to pray this prayer every night this coming week.

Background to the Solemnity for Leaders

A solemnity is a principal day in the life of the Church, and holds the highest rank in the liturgical calendar. A solemnity eclipses all other feasts and memorials, and when a solemnity falls on a Sunday it replaces the ordinary celebration of the day.

The earliest "Roman" calendar we have, dates back to 354^{AD} and mentions the feast of Saints Peter and Paul being celebrated on 29 June. It appears this feast spread rapidly, firstly in the churches of Africa and then throughout Christendom becoming a universal feast. For hundreds of years then the feast of Sts Peter and Paul has been celebrated, numerous churches have been built in their honour, and yet in their life and ministry the two saints were not involved that closely. Why then are their memorials celebrated together? It is because Peter and Paul are considered the two pillars of the Church. Peter - the shepherd of the flock who governed from his 'chair' in Rome, & Paul the missionary and 'Apostle to the nations' who travelled all over the world founding communities of faith and continuing to encourage them by his letters and visits. These two men were the greatest leaders of the early church.

Reflection for Leaders

This solemnity reminds us that the diversity of vocations and ministries found in the Church need not impede our communion, but in fact serve to strengthen it. Peter and Paul had contrasting charisms, but both were at the service of the same gospel, and they illustrate to us the nature of the Church, at the same time diverse, and yet unified.

Spend some time this week reflecting on your different gifts and talents.

How are you using these in the service of the Church?

Is God challenging you to use your gifts in some new or different way at this time?

Spend some time in prayer asking for the faith of St Peter and the courage of St Paul, that you may be faithful to God's call on your life.

Liturgy Outline

Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, today you give us the joy of celebrating the feast of the apostles Peter and Paul. Through them your Church first received the faith. Keep us true to their teaching. Amen

FIRST READING Acts 12:1-11
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 34
 The Lord set me free from all my fears
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included this week)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 16:13-19
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: With hope and faith we come to our compassionate God with all our needs

- That the Church, built on Peter's faith and formed by Paul's preaching may be a light to all people and show them the way to God.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That those who take the Gospel to foreign lands may have courage and strength.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That those who help the poor, the grieving and the lonely may be encouraged and persevere.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For those who have died, that they may have eternal life with Christ.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of compassion, give us the faith and courage of Peter and Paul and help us in our own way to carry the word of God to others. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**White**

God chose Mary to be the mother of his son Jesus. What was so special about Mary that she was chosen above all others to give birth to Jesus? How did Mary show that she had such great faith? She was always ready and willing to do whatever God wanted. Because she was so special and sinless she was taken up body and soul to be with Jesus in heaven – this is what 'Assumption' means. What qualities of Mary would we like to grow in ourselves?



Gospel

Luke 1:39-56

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

"He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. "He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever." And Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months and then returned to her home.

The gospel of the Lord.

First Reading

Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The door to God's temple in heaven was then opened, and the sacred chest could be seen inside the temple. Something important appeared in the sky. It was a woman whose clothes were the sun. The moon was under her feet, and a crown made of twelve stars was on her head. She was about to give birth, and she was crying because of the great pain.

Something else appeared in the sky. It was a huge red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and a crown on each of its seven heads. With its tail, it dragged a third of the stars from the sky and threw them down to the earth. Then the dragon turned towards the woman, because it wanted to eat her child as soon as it was born.

The woman gave birth to a son, who would rule all nations with an iron rod. The boy was snatched away. He was taken to God and placed on his throne. The woman ran into the desert to a place that God had prepared for her.

Then I heard a voice from heaven shout, "Our God has shown his saving power, and his kingdom has come! God's own Chosen One has shown his authority.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 45

Response:

The Queen stands at your right hand arrayed in gold

The daughters of kings are among your loved ones.
On your right stands the queen in gold of Ophir.
Listen, O daughter, give ear to my words:
forget your own people and your father's house.

So will the king desire your beauty:
He is your lord, pay homage to him
They are escorted amid gladness and joy:
they pass within the palace of the king.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, candle, a statue or picture of Mary

Images from the Readings

- Mary set out with haste
- Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit
- My soul magnifies the Lord
- All generations will call me blessed
- Mary remained three months

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. What does this story tell us about Mary? (that she was blessed and a woman of faith, that she cared for and helped other people even when that meant she had to go out of her way)

What other special qualities do we know about Mary?

Knowing these things, what should we do about them (imitate them)

Mary teaches each of us how to be a follower of Jesus, and we know that she is in heaven because she was a true person of faith, the mother of Jesus. This feast, the Assumption, is a special day in our Church year, called a Holy Day of Obligation. Our Church teaches that because Mary was so holy and sinless, that she was taken up into heaven body and soul to be with Jesus forever.

What special prayer or song do you know that recalls this gospel today? (Hail Mary, The Rosary, The Magnificat)

Act of Worship

Sing “The Magnificat” or teach the children the “Hail Mary”

“Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with you.

Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen”

Background to the Readings for Leaders

God has already been active in the lives of the two women who meet in today’s gospel. Elizabeth, a kinswoman of Mary, has conceived a child in her old age by the grace of God. The journey that Mary undertakes to go to her would have been arduous and difficult, from Nazareth in the north, to the hills of Judea in the south. Both women are carrying children who are destined to play important roles in God’s plan of salvation. Elizabeth already knows the greater role that Mary plays, and her greeting affirms this. Mary’s prayer, known as the Magnificat, points away from herself towards God for whom nothing is impossible. The feast of the Assumption was declared dogma in 1950, but belief in this action of God has been part of Church tradition since around 500AD. The way that the Church has honoured and revered Mary has changed over the years.

Reflection for Leaders

Mary has always been upheld by the Church as the first model of discipleship. By her heartfelt ‘Yes’ to God, she perfectly co-operated with God’s plan. What qualities do you see in Mary that speak to you of discipleship? What Marian devotions are expressed today? Do you know some of the official Titles given to Mary by the Church? What image do they present to you of who Mary was? In today’s gospel, both Mary and Elizabeth have conceived as a result of the promise of God. Promises can carry power. Reflect on the promises that have been made to you in your life. How have these been kept or broken? What about promises you have made to others?

Do you recognise ways God has honoured you with promises made to you? In what ways in your life do you proclaim the greatness of God? This week reflect on some of the things that God has done for you, and find someone who would appreciate a visit from you.

Liturgy Outline

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their
Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim
God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted
to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: Loving God, you chose Mary to be mother of your Son, Jesus. Help
us to say yes to what you ask of us, just as Mary did.
Amen

FIRST READING Revelation 11:19; 12:1-6a, 10ab

PSALM Psalm 45
 The Queen stands at your right hand, arrayed in gold
(*or another suitable response known by the children*)

SECOND READING (*not included*)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (*Sing*)
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Luke 1:39-56
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(*Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.*)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(*Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children*)

Leader: With hopeful hearts, let us come to God with all our needs:

- That our church always teaches her people to pray, to trust God, and not give up ...
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to notice and think of other people and pray for their needs...
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a good attitude to God even when we don't understand everything, that our prayers will be pleasing to God and help our faith to grow ...
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to be persistent and confident in our prayer...
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of love, look with kindness on us and hear our prayers.
We ask this through Our Lord Jesus Christ

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Triumph of the Holy Cross

White



The Gospel gives us the reason for Jesus' coming to earth. "God loved the world so much." Jesus is the visible expression of God's unconditional love for us. Everyone who believes that Jesus came, lived and died for us, and was raised to new life, will live forever!

Gospel

John 3:13-17

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Jesus told Nicodemus:

"No one has gone up to heaven except the Son of Man, who came down from there. And the son of Man must be lifted up, just as that metal snake was lifted up by Moses in the desert. Then everyone who has faith in the Son of Man will have eternal life.

"God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never die. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn its people. He sent him to save them!"

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Numbers 21:4b-9

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

One day the people of Israel got angry and started insulting Moses and God. They said, "Did you bring us out of Egypt just to let us die in the desert? There's no bread or water in this place. We are sick of this awful food!"

So the Lord sent poisonous snakes to attack the people, and many of them were bitten and died.

The others came to Moses and said, "We were wrong to insult you and the Lord. Please pray for the Lord to take these snakes away."

Moses prayed for the people. Then the Lord said, "Make a snake out of bronze and put it on a pole. The people who are bitten can look at the snake, and they won't die." So Moses made a bronze snake and put it on a pole. Everyone who looked at the snake lived, even after being bitten by a poisonous snake.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 88

Response:

Our Lord and God, you keep me safe

Lord God, I am as good as dead and completely helpless.
I am no better off than those in the grave,
Those you have forgotten and no longer help

Why do you reject me? Why do you turn from me?
Ever since I was a child, I have been sick and close to death

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Red cloth, Lectionary, candle, crucifix

Images from the Readings

- A bronze snake on a pole
- Jesus lifted up
- God gave his only Son
- Jesus was sent to save and not condemn

Discussion Points

A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses.

You might like to build on these questions:

Act of Worship

...

Background to the Readings

The people of Israel had rebelled against God and Moses in a particularly scandalous way, forgetting God's mercy and faithfulness, they accuse him of having brought them out of Egypt to die in the desert. The venomous snakes were recognised as a punishment of God. Their repentance opens the way for God to bring healing by telling them to make and look at a bronze snake on a pole. It is God who heals. This incident foreshadows the later events of the Gospel

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is the means by which God's plan of salvation can be effected.

Jesus speaks with Nicodemus, echoing the story of Moses with the bronze snake to illustrate the significance of God's mercy and limitless love. Jesus shares his knowledge of the things of heaven. The gospel reveals the triumphant cross that brings salvation to all who have faith in Jesus Christ.

Reflection on the Readings for Leaders

For those who have received baptism, the lifting up of the Son of Man brings eternal life, just as those who looked upon the metal snake lifted up in the desert received healing. It is in the 'lifting up' that we recognise Jesus' true nature, which draws everyone to himself. God pardons sin and the cross is a triumph which reveals that 'God is love' and illuminates the path that leads to blessing and life.

Today's Gospel story is a revelation to Nicodemus of God's love. Yet it requires a look of faith to recognise in the cross the sign of salvation. It does not ignore sin, since sin was the cause of Jesus' death, but by realising the gravity of sin we also realise the depth of God's mercy and love.

Have there been times when I have received healing in an unexpected way? In what ways do I show mercy and love to those who have caused me hurt?

Liturgy Outline

Triumph of the Holy Cross

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessed be God

Blessed be God

Leader: O God,

You sent your Son to save us because you love us so much. Help us to be generous and unselfish with each other
Amen

FIRST READING Numbers 21:4-9

Reader The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 78

Our Lord and God, you keep me safe

(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included this week – see notes for leaders)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL

John 3:13-17

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: With hearts full of hope, let us pray to our loving God for our needs:

- That the leaders of the Church will be given wisdom and courage to lead God's people
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That people who are sick and alone will find comfort in Jesus
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That people of Aotearoa-New Zealand will work for justice and peace
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will share the hope we have with others
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of mercy and love, we ask you to hear the prayers that we your children make to you through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Solemnity of All Saints

White

The feast of All Saints is a remembrance of all those men and women who have lived heroic gospel-inspired lives and who have been recognised by the Church. This feast reminds us of our ultimate goal - to be with God.



Gospel

Matthew 5:1-12b

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the side of a mountain and sat down.

Jesus' disciples gathered around him, and he taught them:

"God blesses those people who depend only on him. They belong to the kingdom of heaven!

God blesses those people who grieve. They will find comfort!

God blesses those people who are humble. The earth will belong to them!

God blesses those people who want to obey him more than to eat or drink. They will be given what they want!

God blesses those people who are merciful. They will be treated with mercy!

God blesses those people whose hearts are pure. They will see him!

God blesses those people who make peace. They will be called his children!

God blesses those people who are treated badly for doing right. They belong to the kingdom of heaven.

God will bless you when people insult you, mistreat you, and tell all kinds of evil lies about you because of me.

Be happy and excited! You will have a great reward in heaven.

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Revelation 7:9-10

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF REVELATION

I, John, saw a large crowd with more people than could be counted. They were from every race, tribe, nation, and language, and they stood before the throne and before the Lamb. They wore white robes and held palm branches in their hands, as they shouted, "Our God, who sits upon the throne, has the power to save his people, and so does the Lamb."

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 24

Response: **Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face**

The earth and everything on it
belong to the Lord.

The world and its people belong to him.

The Lord placed it all
on the oceans and the rivers.

Who may climb the Lord's hill
or stand in his holy temple.

Only those who do right for the right reasons,
and don't worship idols
or tell lies under oath.

The Lord God, who saves them,
will bless and reward them,
because they worship and serve
the God of Jacob.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a statue or picture of your parish saint if you have one, or of any other saints important to your parish or area.

Images from the Readings

- Large crowd before the throne
- God blesses
- They belong to the kingdom of heaven
- They will be treated with mercy
- They will be called his children

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Jesus gave his followers the gift of peace. Do you know what peace is? (quietness, calmness, not having trouble)

The peace that Jesus gave to his followers was special. What was special about it? (It came from being filled with the Holy Spirit, this peace is better than a feeling we might try to make ourselves feel)

Jesus offers this peace to anybody who decides to follow him. How do we come to know this peace? (Pray)

When is a good time during the day to spend some peaceful time with God? (Encourage the children to share times that are peaceful in their day)

Why is it important to make time to spend peacefully with God?

When we spend time quietly with God, without distractions and noise, we can speak to him and listen to what he is saying in our hearts. Then we will know that special peace that Jesus offers to us, we will be filled with the spirit of God.

Act of Worship

The Litany of the Saints is a prayer asking many particular saints to pray for us. It is most commonly heard at the Easter Vigil and at Ordination Ceremonies, but can also be used at other times. Pray a this shortened version with the Children.

Leader:

Lord Have Mercy

Christ Have Mercy

Lord Have Mercy

Holy Mary

St Michael

St John the Baptist

St Peter

St Vincent de Paul

St Dominic

St Agnes

St Therese

St Maximillian Kolbe

Blessed Mary MacKillop

All holy men and women

Children:

Lord Have Mercy

Christ Have Mercy

Lord Have Mercy

Pray for us

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Communion with Mary and the Saints is an important part of today's liturgy. As early as the fourth century the saints were commemorated in the Eucharistic Prayer. At first their was commemoration of Martyrs from the local area and others who were particularly famous. Later, after the time of persecutions had ended Saints who were not martyrs were added to the list. Catalogues of these saints were drawn up and were intended to be universal. These catalogues were called martyrologies, and included names, dates and details of the saints life. Some monasteries today, still read daily from the martyrologies.

The first record of a feast of All Saints is found in the fifth century in some Eastern Churches. It has been celebrated on three different dates, but was fixed on 1 November by Pope Gregory IV in the ninth century. From that time on it spread rapidly. Although at times there has been confusion about the Catholic devotion to the saints, this feast actually centres on the adoration of God. As depicted in this week's reading from the Book of Revelation while we celebrate the liturgy of All Saints here on earth, the saints themselves participate in the heavenly liturgy and point us towards God, the true object of our adoration.

Reflection for Leaders

Take time this week to read an account of the life of a saint and let yourself be inspired. You may choose to obtain a novel length biography or autobiography such as Story of a Soul, which tells of the life of St Therese of Lisieux, or read several short excerpts from a book such as Butler's Lives of the Saints, or access one of the many online resources available.

Liturgy Outline

Solemnity of All Saints

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, today we rejoice in the holy men and women of every time and place. May their prayers bring us your forgiveness and love.
Amen

FIRST READING Revelation 7:9-10
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 24
 Lord , This is the people that longs to see your face
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included this week)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Matthew 5:1-12b
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Let us bring all our prayers in confidence to our loving God:

- That realising our dependance on God, we may truly belong to God's kingdom.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That those who mourn may be comforted by God's compassion are cared for by God's people.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That imitating God's mercy in the way we deal with other people, we ourselves may receive God's mercy.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That those who are treated badly for doing right may receive strength and courage.

Leader: God of goodness, your pour out your blessings on your children, may we always turn to you in our need, and rejoice with you in our joy. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings
All Souls
Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed

Violet

Most children will know that a seed must be planted in order to grow. It must be buried in the earth. After it is buried, we no longer see it. It seems like nothing is happening to it. Then one day, we see a sprout. It's growing. That means it's really alive. Now it doesn't look like a grain, but wheat. Jesus tells us that our death is like that. Jesus showed us that this is true because he

died and was raised to a new life and his is now alive and with us.

Gospel

Matthew 11:25-26,28-30

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

On one occasion Jesus said: "My Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I am grateful that you hid all this from wise and educated people. Yes, Father, that is what pleased you."

Then Jesus said: "If you are tired from carrying heavy burdens, come to me and I will give you rest. Take the yoke I give you. Put it on your shoulders and learn from me. I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest. This yoke is easy to bear, and this burden is light."

The gospel of the Lord**First Reading**

Isaiah 25:6a, 7-9

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

On this mountain the Lord All-Powerful will prepare for all the nations a feast of the finest foods.

Here the Lord will strip away the funeral clothes that cover the nations. The Lord All-Powerful will destroy the power of death and wipe away each tear. No longer will his people be embarrassed everywhere. The Lord has spoken! On that day, people will say, "The Lord God has saved us! Let's celebrate. We waited and waited, and now he is here."

The word of the Lord**Responsorial Psalm**

Psalm 26:1,4,7-9

Response:

The Lord is my light and my salvation

You, Lord, are the light that keeps me safe. I am not afraid of anyone. You protect me, and I have no fears.

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

*I know that I will live to see how kind you are. Trust the Lord!
 Be brave and strong and trust the Lord!*

Second Reading

Ephesians 1:3-5

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE PHESIANS

Brothers and sisters: Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the spiritual blessings that Christ has brought us from heaven! Before the world was created, God let Christ choose us to live with him and to be his holy and innocent and loving people. God was kind and decided that Christ would choose us to be God's own adopted children.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Violet cloth (Feast day commemorating those who have died in Christ), Lectionary, a candle, a basket in which to place the names of family members or close friends who have died.

Images from the Readings

- Share in resurrection
- Blessings of life to come
- Pardon and peace
- Sleep in Christ
- Life is changed, not ended

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow children the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion; building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Tell the child that today is a special feast day in our Church. It is the day that we remember all those people who have died. Some of these may be our family members or people that we have been close to. It might be our grandparents. We believe that when a person dies, that is not the end but the beginning of a new life where we all share in the resurrection of Jesus. We also feel peace and hope for them because they have passed through death to a new life in Jesus. Have you ever felt really sad and hurting when someone you loved or knew well has died? Do you remember hearing part of this story on Palm Sunday just before Easter?

If we believe that Jesus is the Good News, how can we spread that Good News and help people to realise that we have a real treasure hidden in our lives?

Is the way we live important, or just what we say about Jesus and his life and death? If the way that we live is important, how should we live?

Act of Worship

As an act of worship, invite the children to write the name of a family member (eg grandparents) who has died on a card and place it in the basket at the prayer focus. Say a prayer for all those people. You could sing the acclamation: "Dying you destroyed our death, Rising you restored our life. Lord Jesus come in glory"

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The scene depicted in the Isaiah passage is one of permanent victory, abundant feasting and life without end. Set high on a mountain where the power and magnificence of God are manifest and where God destroys death and all that diminishes life. God wipes away the painful history of struggle, deprivation and slavery. The struggles of the past give way to rejoicing – voices lifted in praise and thanksgiving. The rich foods are symbols of the fullness of life and all peoples will feast on the mountain not just in Israelites.

Mark's gospel account of the passion and death of Jesus leaves us with an image of deep suffering, pain and a sense of total abandonment that Jesus feels. But it is when Jesus is crucified that a whole new chapter begins. His divinity is recognised in a public declaration by the centurion – a foreigner. At his death the veil of the temple curtain was split symbolising that heaven and earth had united. The normal burial rituals of the time included the anointing of a body. Because Jesus had been buried in haste before the Sabbath (sunset Friday to sunset Saturday), the women had to wait until after the Sabbath to complete these rituals. The empty tomb turns what seems to be defeat into the ultimate triumph.

Reflection for Leaders

As Christians, we believe that our human death leads us to eternal life with God, won for us by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Christ has conquered death itself. Fear of death and difficulty with the subject isn't an area reserved solely for children. Our culture does not always help in the acceptance of death as a natural process, preferring to hide it away as too painful to explore. An opportunity to talk with people from other cultures about the way that they deal with grief and loss might be an avenue we could explore today. Take the opportunity to look up some of the doctrines in the catechism, and examine some of the prayers of the funeral rite to identify the hope and celebration that is associated with a Christian view of death.

Recollect a time when you have felt despair and abandonment. How were you able to get through these difficult times? Who was there to help you? Make time this week to pray for loves ones who have died.

Liturgy Outline

All Souls Day

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, through Jesus you have shown us the way to lasting happiness. Help us to be open to his message so that we will be examples of his saving love to others Amen

FIRST READING Isaiah 25:6-9
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 26
 The Lord is my light and my salvation
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Romans 5:5-11
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Mark 15:33-39; 16:1-6
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Let us pray to our saving God for all our needs.

- For the leaders of the Church who will be the servants of all people
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For people everywhere who grieve
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the people of Aotearoa-New Zealand, that they will live together in peace and harmony
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That our homes and families will be places of peace and contentment for all who enter
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of compassion, hear the prayers that we your children make to you through Jesus Christ our Lord
All: Amen

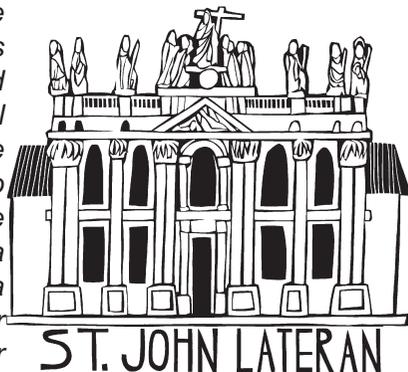
The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Dedication of St John Lateran

White

Today's feast focuses on the church. The particular church, St John Lateran in Rome, is the cathedral church of the Bishop of Rome and is also therefore the symbol of the universal church. A building however is a place where people live or work. It is the building, but also the group of Christians who go there. If we have a Christian gathering - for example a Mass in the park - that is also the church. If a group of Christians gather to prepare food for the poor, that is also the church. Whenever we do things in the name of Christ, that's the church.



Gospel

Luke 19:1-10

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

Jesus was going through Jericho, where a man named Zacchaeus lived. He was in charge of collecting taxes and was very rich.

Jesus was heading his way, and Zacchaeus wanted to see what he was like. But Zacchaeus was a short man and could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree.

When Jesus got there, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down! I want to stay with you today."

Zacchaeus hurried down and gladly welcomed Jesus.

Everyone who saw this started grumbling, "This man Zacchaeus is a sinner! And Jesus is going home to eat with him."

Later that day Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "I will give half of my property to the poor. And I will now pay back four times as much to everyone I have ever cheated."

Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "Today you and your family have been saved, because you are a true son of Abraham. The Son of Man came to look for and to save people who are lost."

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Isaiah 56:1,6-7

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

The Lord said, "Be honest and fair!

"Soon I will come to save you, and my saving power will be seen. Foreigners will follow me. They will love me and worship in my name. They will respect the Sabbath and keep our agreement.

"Then I will bring them to my holy mountain and let them celebrate in my house of worship. Their sacrifices and offerings will all be welcome on my altar. And my house will be known as a house of worship for all nations."

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 84:2,3,4-5,10

Response:

Here God lives among his people

Deep in my heart I long for your temple, and with all that I am I sing joyful songs to you

Lord God All-Powerful, my King and my God, sparrows find a home near your altars; swallows build nests there to raise their young.

You bless everyone who lives in your house, and they sing your praises. You bless all who depend on you for their strength and all who deeply desire to visit your temple

One day in your temple is better than a thousand anywhere else. I would rather serve in your house, than live in the homes of the wicked

Second Reading

Ephesians 2:20-22

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

Brothers and sisters: You are like a building with the apostles and prophets as the foundation and with Christ as the most important stone. Christ is the one who holds the building together and makes it grow into a holy temple for the Lord. And you are part of that building Christ has built as a place for God's own Spirit to live.

The word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a small bowl of blessed water and sprigs of greenery to sprinkle it with.

Images from the Readings

- Jesus drove them all out of the Temple
- Jesus' body is the sanctuary
- Water flowing from the temple
- The city of God
- You are the temple of God

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Tell the children that today we focus on the Church – St John Lateran in Rome is the Cathedral Church of the Pope, and so it is a symbol of the whole Church throughout the world.

What do you think 'Church' means? We often use this word in two ways (both the building and the people who gather there)

Jesus speaks about himself as the Church. What did he say would happen in three days? What do you think this meant for the people?

What do you know about your own parish history – the church and other facilities, the people and pastors?

How can we look after the building of our Church?

How can we look after the building of faith and hope that lives in us?

Water is important in our daily lives. What different ways is it important to us? (cleansing, growth) Where has water been used in a special way and with a special meaning in your life?

When we were baptised into the church, water was used – how does this compare with what we have just recognised in daily life?

Act of Worship

Use some blessed water and sprinkle the children. As each person feels the droplets of water fall on them they make the sign of the cross. This reminds us of the commitment made for us at our baptism

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Ezekial recounts a vision of the temple, where he is able to observe a stream of water flowing from the east into a mighty river. This water is transformative, and through it the saving power of God goes out from the temple – the water, all that the water touches, and the fruits produced by that which the water touched. The power of the presence of God radiates throughout creation.

The readings continue the theme of the temple. Just as the presence of God made the Temple in Jerusalem holy, so it is the presence of the Spirit of God that makes the new temple holy, and the Spirit dwells in all of the members.

The first Temple was built by King Solomon in the 10th Century BC and housed the Ark of the Covenant, containing the stone tablets given to Moses by God. This Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC, and the Ark was lost forever.

After returning from exile in Babylon in about 520 BC, the Jewish people rebuilt the Temple. A major rebuilding of the structure was undertaken during the reign of Herod the Great (37-4 BC) It is this rebuilding that is referred to in the Gospel reading today.

Reflection for Leaders

In the Gospel, Jesus lashes out at those who are using the Temple as a marketplace. Yet the sellers and the money-changers were legitimate and necessary for Jewish temple practices. By driving out the merchants Jesus announces that the time of fulfilment has come, and by identifying God as his Father, affirms his right to make such a claim and act on it. His listeners take his words about his body being the temple or sanctuary literally. Jesus reinterprets himself in many of the traditional practices of Judaism. Instead of worship of God being centred in animal sacrifice, or the Temple building itself, Jesus points to himself as the way to God. Only later, and with hindsight, will the disciples recognise the insight into what Jesus was actually saying.

Are there things in our world you have found yourself getting passionately angry about? Things that have roused you to action?

What form do these actions take?

Reflect on the growth of the early Church through its periods of persecution, and places today where persecution is taking place, and think about what effect this has on peoples' faith. What, for you, is the centre of your prayer and worship?

Liturgy Outline

Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessed be God

Blessed be God

Leader: O God, you have made for us a church of many people. Thank you for giving us companions on our journey to you. May we always welcome those who are outsiders and be friends to those in need. Amen

FIRST READING Ezekiel 47:1-2,8-9, 12

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 45

The waters of the river gladden the city of God.

(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Corinthians 3:9-11, 16-17

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL

John 2:13-22

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Let us pray to God our creator for all our needs.

- For a church that hears the cry of the poor
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For those families who cannot afford shelter
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the people of Aotearoa-New Zealand will be as one people
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will help to make our families and homes places of peace and welcome
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: O God, you care for your people. Hear the prayers that we your children make to you through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Feast of the Transfiguration

White



Today we celebrate the Transfiguration, the moment when Peter James and John saw Jesus' glory. It left them amazed, and was a sign to help them through the upcoming days when Jesus was to be crucified.

Gospel

Luke 9:28b-36

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

Jesus took Peter, John, and James with him and went up on a mountain to pray.

While he was praying, his face changed, and his clothes became shining white. Suddenly Moses and Elijah were there speaking with him. They appeared in heavenly glory and talked about all that Jesus' death in Jerusalem would mean.

Peter and the other two disciples had been sound asleep. All at once they woke up and saw how glorious Jesus was. They also saw the two men who were with him.

Moses and Elijah were about to leave, when Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here! Let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But Peter did not know what he was talking about.

While Peter was still speaking, a shadow from a cloud passed over them, and they were frightened as the cloud covered them. From the cloud a voice spoke, "This is my chosen Son. Listen to what he says!"

After the voice had spoken, Peter, John and James saw only Jesus. For some time they kept quiet and did not say anything about what they had seen.

The gospel of the Lord

First Reading

2 Peter 1:16-19

A READING FROM THE SECOND LETTER OF PETER

Brothers and sisters: When we told you about the power and the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, we were not telling clever stories that someone had made up. But with our own eyes we saw his true greatness.

God, our great and wonderful Father, truly honoured him by saying, "This is my own dear Son, and I am pleased with him." We were there with Jesus on the holy mountain and heard this voice speak from heaven.

All of this makes us even more certain that what the prophets said is true. So you should pay close attention to their message, as you would to a lamp shining in some dark place. You must keep on paying attention until daylight comes and the morning star rises in your hearts.

The word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 97

Response:

The Lord is King

The most high over all the earth

The Lord is King!

Tell the earth to celebrate
and all islands to shout.

Dark clouds surround him,
and his throne is supported
by justice and fairness.

Mountains melt away like wax
in the presence of the Lord
of all the earth.

The heavens announce,
"The Lord brings justice!"
Everyone sees God's glory.

The Lord rules the whole earth,
and he is more glorious
than all the false gods.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a picture depicting the transfiguration.

Images from the Readings

- Alone
- So frightened
- Listen to him
- Son of Man
- The Beloved

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Who went up to the top of the mountain with Jesus?

What happened while they were there? What happens when the sun shines in our eyes? (We're dazzled - this is a bit like the experience the disciples had).

What was it that God said to Peter, James and John?

Help the children to see that in this story Jesus is showing the disciples (as well as us) something of who he really is, and sharing an important message with us.

"This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him."

Ask the children some of the things that Jesus has said to us - try to help them remember specific teachings rather than generalisations eg. Pray for those who are cruel to you (Lk 6:28); Treat others as you want to be treated (Luke 6:31); Forgive others (Mk 11:25-26); Give generously not because you'll be paid back (Lk 14:12-14); Love each other as Christ loved us (Jn 15:12).

If we really think about who Jesus is - the Son of God - then we will realise that what he asks us to do is very important, we should listen to him and live our lives in the way he asks us to.

Act of Worship

Ask the children to close their eyes and sit quietly. Once they have settled read the following slowly and deliberately: "Imagine you are going for a walk up in the mountains... its a beautiful day... as you approach the top of the mountain you see a tree... as you get closer to the tree you realise there is a man sitting under the tree looking out over the countryside... as you approach the man, he invites

you to sit down beside him, he introduces himself, his name is Jesus... Quietly, in your mind, have a conversation with Jesus, tell him what is on your mind, perhaps what you are excited about at the moment, or anxious about. PAUSE Listen now to what Jesus wants to say to you. PAUSE. Quietly, when you are ready, open your eyes.

Background to the Feast of the Transfiguration for Leaders

In the Hebrew scriptures high mountains are seen as holy places, we remember the Ten Commandments were given to Moses on Mt Sinai, and that Elijah heard the voice of God on Mt Horeb. So the fact that it was on a high mountain that the transfiguration occurred marks it as a moment of significance. The presence of Moses - often associated with the law - and Elijah - a prophet, can be seen to signal that part of the revelation to the disciples was that Jesus was the fulfilment of both the law and the prophets. It also revealed to the disciples something of the experience of the Lord, come into his glory at the end of his Easter journey. This fleeting moment of revelation leaves the three disciples amazed and in awe, yet they are still unable to grasp the full significance of what they have seen. These three disciples are also the three that witness Jesus' agony in the garden before his arrest and crucifixion, yet despite all that Jesus had told them, and all they had seen, they still did not understand. It is not until after the resurrection that they remember what happened on the mountain, and it is only then that they are able to fearlessly bear witness to the truth that was revealed to them.

Reflection for Leaders

In his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI writes "being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction". That person is Jesus Christ who is placed before us on this Feast of the Transfiguration.

Take some time to reflect on your Christian journey.

What have been some times of significant encounter for you?

Was there ever a time when moved by an experience of prayer, a reading from scripture, or an experience of the sacraments, you felt drawn to make a change in your life, to move in a new direction?

In the difficult moments of your life what scriptures or faith experiences sustain you and give you hope?

Liturgy Outline

Feast of the Transfiguration

After the Introductory Rites, at the conclusion of the Opening Prayer but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION I invite the children to join in the procession for their Celebration of the Word

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS

WELCOME

Leader: We have come together, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed be God
 Blessed be God

Leader: O God, as we listen to the account of the transfiguration today, help us to see the glory of your Son and help us to give him a special place in our lives. Amen

FIRST READING 2 Peter 1:16-19
Reader The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM Psalm 97
 The Lord is King, the Most High over all the earth
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included this week)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL Luke 9:28b-36
Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke
 Glory to you, Lord

at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word: The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS
(Refer to end notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Let us bring our prayers to God.

- For the Church, that it will always be a place where people can experience the power and love of Jesus.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For people who have experienced the devastation of a natural disaster, that their sadness be transformed into joy through the generosity of others.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For those who help the poor, may their love and justice transform the lives of those they meet.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For all of us who have heard the message of Jesus, that through living out what he has taught us, we might be a light to the world.
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: God of power and might, we ask you to hear and answer our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord.
All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

