

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 the preparation of the Gifts. Children rejoin their families.





AOVERC

Readings

First Sunday of Advent

First Reading 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brothers and sisters: My prayer is that God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ will be kind to you and will bless you with peace!

I never stop thanking my God for being kind enough to give you Christ Jesus, who helps you speak and understand so well. Now you are certain that everything we told you about our Lord Christ Jesus is true.

You are not missing out on any blessings, as you wait for him to return. And until the day Christ does return, he will keep you completely innocent.

God can be trusted, and he chose you to be partners with his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of the Lord



The word Advent means coming. It is a time of waiting and expectation. Only God knows when the second coming will be, but in today's Gospel we are reminded that we must stay awake and be ready for Jesus when he returns at the end of time.

At this time of the year we are reminded to keep awake and to call upon God for mercy. When we are preparing for anything what do we do? We look forward to the event that is about to happen with excitement and sometimes with a little trepidation.

Responsorial Psalm

Response:

Psalm 85

Give peace, O Lord, to those who wait for you.

I will listen to you, Lord God, because you promise peace to those who are faithful and no longer foolish.

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.

Gospel

Mark 13:33-37

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus said to his disciples: "Watch out and be ready! You don't know when the time will come. It is like what happens when a man goes away for a while and places his servants in charge of everything. He tells each of them what to do, and he orders the watchmen to be on their guard.

So be on your guard! You don't know when the master of the house will come back. It could be in the evening or at midnight or before dawn or in the morning. But if he comes suddenly, don't let him find you asleep. I tell everyone just what I have told you. Be on your guard!"

The Gospel 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

- Always be ready
- Be on your guard!
- God will bless you with peace
- Believe in Jesus
- Thank God always

Discussion Points

If someone important is coming to visit you and your family, how do you prepare for their coming? Do you

-tidy your room and the rest of the house;

-dust and clean;

-prepare a meal; or make up a bed in the guest room? It is easy to be ready for a visitor when you know the time to expect them, but sometimes they arrive unexpectedly and surprise you! Would you find it more difficult to keep everything just as it should be if you did not know when your visitor was coming?

Does anyone know exactly when Jesus will return to us? We know that Jesus will return at the end of time, but only God knows exactly when that will be.

What did Jesus tell us to do? To keep ourselves ready for the time when he will come again. How can we do this? Just as we prepare our homes and put them in order for a visitor, so we can prepare our hearts and put our lives in order for Jesus.

Advent is a good time to spring clean our lives! To polish up the good things and make them shine, and to clear out the bad habits so that we can make a fresh start. By living each day as Jesus taught us, filled with goodness and love, we will be ready to welcome him when he comes again.

Act of Worship (Use this at the beginning of prayer with the children)

Invite the children to join hands around the focus and pray a blessing on the wreath: "Lord God, let your love 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

Mark is writing for a community that is suffering persecution for what it believes and for the faith it practices. The people believe that the end time is near because their persecution seems like a battle of the forces of good against the forces for evil in their world. Mark tells them that they are to be vigilant, to wait in hope. He tells them that though they are expecting the end times, that the end times have already begun is not certain. He says that we don't know when that time will come and that the best attitude to adopt is to always be ready for it, to always live in hope. The future Mark tells them is in God's hands and beyond our control, understanding or prediction.

Isaiah tells his people that they are to be known for their faith and hope in God. A people who are forever watching for the actions and the presence of God in the world. Isaiah's is a lament on behalf of his people, just returned to their land after suffering exile and hard times. They are struggling to re-establish themselves, poverty is rife yet they are full of hope. In their hope they chide their God for his apparent absence, they are striving for success and know that unless the hand of God is visible in what they do then they strive in vain. So they chide God in their determination to succeed.

Reflection for Leaders

When we are looking forward to some event, a birthday for instance, how do we feel as the time draws nearer? Does our behaviour change at this time of waiting and preparing? How do we behave that is different to 'normal'?

The Gospel today tells us that we don't know when the waited for event is going to happen. We are told to always be on our guard to always be expecting the end of things as we know them. There are some things during a time of waiting that we can keep on growing in our lives. What about the feeling of hope we have that comes from a belief that we have been blessed by God with the gift of our faith. That appreciation can grow and survive throughout all of our lives. So like Paul in the Second Reading we will continue to thank God for our Saviour in our prayer, by full and active participation in the Sunday Eucharist and by participation as an active member of the church in the world in our dealings with others.

It is important especially to keep that feeling of hope alive and active in our lives. Hope is the dynamo that drives us on through the daily struggles we face. It is the source of our missionary journey to others. Hope is the light in us that attracts others to our way of life. Unless we live as people of hope we are robbing others of the chance to see that we have faith in our redemption and in the redemptive teachings of Christ.

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 are our maker, we rely on your help and mercy
Be with us this day and always so that we may live good lives.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader 1 Corinthians 1:3-9
The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 85
Give peace, O Lord, to those who wait for you.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (Sing)
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 13:24-37

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark
 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 previous page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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: Inspired by today's readings let us call upon our loving God for our needs:

- For the church, home of the poor, that in all countries the poor and the needy will be welcomed. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For food enough to feed everyone, that starvation and malnutrition will be forgotten. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That everyone will find the hope of faith. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will be ready and willing to live Christian lives. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

God of Promises and Hope, you care for your people, care for us and for those for whom we pray through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

All:

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

Readings

Second Sunday of Advent

Violet

The readings of these first weeks of Advent stress over and over that our lives are in the hands of a merciful God, and echo the cry to prepare a way and a place for the Lord within our cluttered lives. In today's Gospel the coming of the Messiah is proclaimed by John. Why do you think Advent is a good time to think about our lives, what we are doing right and what we can improve on?



Gospel

THE BEGINNING OF THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

This is the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It began just as God had said in the book written by Isaiah the prophet, "I am sending my messenger to get the way ready for you. In the desert someone is shouting, 'Get the road ready for the Lord! Make a straight path for him.'" So John the Baptist showed up in the desert and told everyone, "Turn back to God and be baptized! Then your sins will be forgiven." From all Judea and from Jerusalem crowds of people went to John. They told how sorry they were for their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan River. John wore clothes made of camel's hair. He had a leather strap around his waist and ate grasshoppers and wild honey. John also told the people, "Someone more powerful is going to come. And I am not good enough even to stoop down and untie his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!"

The Gospel of the Lord

Mark 1:1-8

First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

A voice is shouting:

Clear a path in the desert for the Lord. Build a straight road there for our God. Fill in the valleys and flatten the mountains and hills. Level the rough and rugged ground.

Then the glory of the Lord will appear for all to see. The Lord has promised this!

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalms 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 and no longer foolish.

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.

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

- clear a path
- a straight road
- mountains and hills
- rough and rugged ground
- the desert
- baptism with water
- the Holy Spirit

Discussion Points

What was the name of the prophet who had foretold the coming of John the Baptist? What is a prophet? A prophet is someone who speaks in the name of God and has been allowed by God to know and share a part of his plan for mankind.

John was God's messenger; he was sent to tell the people to change their ways and to turn back to God. He told them to make a fresh start by asking forgiveness for their sins and trying to lead lives filled with goodness and love.

John was sent to prepare the people for the coming of Jesus. Do we still need to prepare for Jesus' coming today? Jesus could return at any time (recall last week's discussion). We can prepare ourselves just as people did in the time of John the Baptist, by putting right what is wrong in our lives and living as Jesus taught us. Advent is a good time to look carefully at ourselves and to make a fresh start if we need to. When can we meet Jesus and ask for his forgiveness? Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation we can tell Jesus that we are sorry and receive his forgiveness. Through the priest, God allows us to hear that our sins are forgiven so we can start anew knowing that God loves us very much. Can you think of anything that needs to be put right in your life?

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 in the first reading today writes as the people of Israel are going back to their homelands after exile, so there is a feeling that something good and magnificent is about to happen and that the entire landscape will change to accommodate this coming. By placing the reading from Isaiah with the reading from Mark we are shown a picture of Jesus as the New Moses leading the people to a promised land. Fulfilling God's plan for his people. The desert features as a place of exile and preparation in both stories.

John is described as being like the prophets of old in dress and life style, especially like Elijah and his baptism was similarly a preparation for the baptism of the Spirit expected to come with the Messiah.

The images in the first reading of ground and landscape and making straight and level paths can be read as a metaphor for our hearts and our lives. We can use with the children the idea of the gardener preparing the soil for planting seed, the digging, the raking, making smooth, getting the soil ready. Similarly we must prepare ourselves for the seed of Jesus Word in our lives. How? By listening to the word with close attention. And once the plant of our faith and the love of God in us is growing, we must care for it. Not by locking it away. But by making it robust with exercise and practice and showing it to the world. Making it visible in our day to day dealings with people.

Reflection for Leaders

The Gospel for today begins by talking about good news, what is the good news it refers to? Jesus is the Good News, God's Son come into the world, God has visited the people. What do you know about John the Baptist? What does today's Gospel tell us about him? Ask the children about preparing for a birth in their family (those who have experienced this). Talk about the time of waiting and excited expectation. What does their mother do in preparation? What things need to be considered? We, as do mothers, need peace and quiet for preparation. We need help as new mothers need help. We need to ask for that help. Who do we ask. What do we ask for? Discuss the idea of Advent as a journey towards a goal. To journey alone or with others is a question that can be considered.

You might talk with the children about John the Baptist, how his whole life was dedicated to one thing, "preparing the way of the Lord", now we are asked to prepare also. To make a space in our lives for God and the things of God by prayer and thinking about God and the great work of Jesus.

Discuss the idea that they might draw up a plan—make a list of the things in their lives that they plan to change in order to prepare a bigger place for God in their lives.

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 are all goodness and mercy. We are trying to turn our lives back to you. Help us to make space in our lives for your love. Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 40:1-5

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 84

Lord, show us your mercy and love, and grant us your salvation.

(or another suitable response known by the children)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

Mark 1:1-8

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark. 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 previous page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 let us now call upon God in prayer:

- For the Church where all people can find a welcome, that together we will prepare to live responsible lives. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For the poor and outcasts of the world, that they will find a place and people to care for them. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For peace and goodwill among the people of the South Pacific, that the strong will help the weak and poor. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will help our family at home and our teachers and workmates at school even if we don't want to. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

O God you are our hope, fill our hearts and the hearts of those for whom we pray with your love so that we may better serve you and each other. We make our prayer, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

All:

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

Notes

Readings

Third Sunday of Advent

Violet

John is a man sure of his purpose and mission. We can pray that we may be like him, sure of the path that God wants us to walk. If we are not sure or if we have gone our own way a bit what better time is there to find the path once more and set our feet back on it with renewed resolve.



First Reading

Isaiah 61: 1-2

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

The Spirit of the Lord has come to me, because he has chosen me. The Lord has sent me to tell the oppressed the good news, to heal the broken hearted, and to announce freedom for prisoners and captives. This is the year when the Lord God will show kindness to us and punish our enemies. The Lord has sent me to comfort all who mourn.

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Luke 1:47 and 49, 53-54; Isaiah 61:10b

Response: **My soul rejoices in my God**

With all my heart I praise the Lord, and I am glad because of God my Saviour. God All-Powerful has done great things for me, and his name is holy.

God gives the hungry good things to eat, and he sends the rich away with nothing in their hands. He helps his servant Israel and is always merciful to his people.

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

Brothers and sisters: always be joyful and never stop praying. Whatever happens, keep thanking God because of Jesus Christ. This is what God wants you to do. Don't turn away God's spirit or ignore prophecies. Put everything to the test. Accept what is good and don't have anything to do with evil.

I pray that God, who gives peace, will make you completely holy. And may your spirit, soul and body be kept healthy and faultless until our Lord Jesus Christ returns. The one who chose you can be trusted, and he will do this.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel

John 1:19 - 28

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and temple helpers to ask John who he was. He told them plainly, "I am not the Messiah." Then when they asked him if he was Elijah, he said, "No, I am not!" And when they asked if he was the Prophet, he also said "No!" Finally they said, "Who are you then? We have to give an answer to the ones who sent us. Tell us who you are!"

John answered in the words of the prophet Isaiah, "I am only someone shouting in the desert, Get the road ready for the Lord."

Some Pharisees had also been sent to John. They asked him, "Why are you baptising people, if you are not the Messiah, or Elijah or the Prophet?"

John told them, "I use water to baptise people. But here with you is someone you don't know. Even though I came first, I am not good enough to untie his sandals."

John said this as he was baptising east of the Jordan River in Bethany.

The Gospel 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

- Witness for the light
- Baptise with water
- Anointed
- Pray constantly

Discussion Points

Who did the priests think that John might be? At first they thought that this extraordinary man might be the Messiah, the saviour promised by God. Then they wondered whether John was Elijah or another prophet.

John helped the crowds prepare a way for the Lord by explaining that true happiness comes from pleasing God and leading lives filled with goodness. By being sorry for the mistakes they had made and the wrongs they had done, and by changing their lives, they could make a fresh start on the way to God.

When people asked for God's forgiveness and made up their minds to live as God wanted them to, John would baptize them in the river. As they came up out of the water, it was as though a new life was just beginning for them.

Most people today are baptized as babies rather than as adults, but water is still used at baptism. All life needs water, and the water used at baptism reminds us that we are now welcomed into the family of God and share in new and everlasting life.

What sort of things has God done for us? Given us families and people to care for us. Given us the Church to guide our lives to Everlasting life. How are we to react to the things God has done for us in our lives? We say thank you to God by respecting what has been given to us and by offering our lives back to God. What kind of a character was John the Baptist? What can we learn from the way he responded to God's call?

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

The fact that there were still followers of John the Baptist long after Jesus had gone back to the Father tells us something about John. This explains why he is deliberately downplayed in some of the Gospel writings. John explains that he is not the Light but a witness to the Light. The Light being the revelation of God. Jesus Christ becomes synonymous with the Light. (In Christ we see clearly who God is and where we should follow to be true people of God.) John the writer makes sure that John the Baptist is made subordinate to Christ he does this through the Baptist's own words. "I am not the Messiah... There is someone you don't know ... even though I came first, I am not good enough to untie his sandals." The water preparation is merely a preparation to the baptism yet to come.

Reflection for Leaders

The readings today speak of being sent, of being full of the spirit of God, of responding to that spirit with action and joyful hearts. The psalm speaks of God as having done great things for us. It speaks of a merciful God who redresses the imbalance between rich and poor, advantaged and disadvantaged, the mighty and the lowly.

The reading from Isaiah tells us how we are to respond to the coming of God into our lives. It is like a song of joy, a hymn of rejoicing. We have been called by our baptism and we in turn are to give the good news of God's message to whomever we meet. We are to respond with joy. In our liturgy we sing of our thanks and praise as we stand redeemed by Jesus Christ we pray with, through and in him before God who has enabled this to happen. We are full to overflowing with hope.

The single pink candle of Advent, in some places alight today reminds us like the pink of the sky before sunrise that a new day is almost upon us. The waiting that is this Advent time reminds us that we are but awaiting the day when in time Jesus will come again in glory.

You might ask the children to agree to live for one day after the example of John the Baptist. Perhaps by fasting or being a sign for others of the coming of Christ or by dressing simply without ornament or bright colour. By acting to others as John was to act to Jesus, as a servant. By, for one day at least preparing for Christ's coming in a special and appropriate way.

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:

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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: God of Hope, with your help we will try to live good lives. We will try to help others, especially our mothers and fathers, our sisters, brothers and friends. Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
 The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm: Luke 1:46-50, 53-54
 My Soul rejoices in my God.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader: *(if included)* 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
 The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

John 1:6-8, 19-28

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 previous page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 strong faith and hope let us bring our prayers before our loving God.

- For the Church, help of those in need, mother of the poor. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.
- For those who suffer from sickness and lack of food. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.
- For those who are without friends. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.
- For the strength to love others as we love ourselves. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.

Leader: O God our hope, shower your abundant blessings upon us and those for whom we pray so that seeing your mercy we might work to help others. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
 All: Amen.

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

Notes

Readings

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Violet

Building a house for the Lord. Let us make a house in our hearts for the Lord of our lives. We could pray to Mary the Mother of God to help us make such a place in our hearts for her son.



First Reading

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and sisters: Praise God! He can make you strong by means of my good news, which is the message about Jesus Christ. For ages and ages this message was kept secret, but now at last it has been told.

The eternal God commanded his prophets to write about the good news, so that all nations would obey and have faith. And now, because of Jesus Christ, we can praise the only wise God forever! Amen.

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Response:

Psalm 47

God is king of all the earth!

All you nations, clap your hands and shout joyful praises to God. The Lord Most High is fearsome, the ruler of all the earth.

God is ruler of all the earth! Praise God with songs. God rules the nations from his sacred throne.

Gospel

Luke 1:26-38

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee with a message for a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King David. The angel greeted Mary and said, "You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you. Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. Then the angel told Mary, "Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. He will rule the people of Israel forever, and his kingdom will never end.

Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen? I am not married!" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you. So your child will be called the holy Son of God. Your relative Elizabeth is also going to have a son, even though she is old. No one thought she could ever have a baby, but in three months she will have a son. Nothing is impossible to God!"

Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said." And the angel left her.

The Gospel 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

- You are truly blessed
- Nothing is impossible to God
- I am the Lord's servant
- Family of King David

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: "What did you hear?" While we listen each child is given the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. You might begin general discussion by building on to the responses offered by the children. One way of expanding on their responses is to use questions which can be prepared beforehand. Some ideas for questions and a reflection follow.

Ask the children to tell you what they know about angels. No one really knows, but often they are depicted as beautiful winged creatures dressed in white and with a halo on their heads. When angels appear they are usually as messengers of God. In the Old Testament, God sent an angel to stop Abraham from sacrificing his son Isaac to prove his love for God. In the New Testament, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream telling him to marry Mary, and many angels appeared to some shepherds on a hillside to tell them about the newborn saviour. Later an angel appeared in a dream to warn Joseph to take his family to Egypt to escape from King Herod. How do you think Mary, felt when the angel appeared to her? At first she was frightened and confused by the angel, but he was able to reassure her and calm her fears. What message did the angel have for Mary? That she would become the mother of God and that her cousin Elizabeth was already expecting a baby.

How did Mary react to Gabriel's message? She listened carefully to his words and agreed to do God's will. At the moment she agreed to become the mother of God, she also became the mother of us all.

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 the Gospel story Luke emphasises the coming of one belonging to the house of David.

Reflection for Leaders

The Gospel speaks of an event that is very different from the ordinary and Mary's reaction to it. Joy is an emotion that is not commonly expressed these days. Mary's commitment is something else that is not now common. Her acceptance of the will of God for her provides an example of obedience that has inspired the lives of thousands of people down through the years. She is the perfect model of the perfect Christian. Accepting her call in life as God's will for her, accepting with joy, having faith and hope in the favourable outcome of this divine intervention in her life, without understanding or questioning. We are told she pondered these things in her heart. Well might we draw an example for our own behaviour from that of the mother of Jesus. How often we question and worry away at something we are told to do, how often we argue against some decision that we dislike or that inconveniences us, unwilling just to accept and live with it. Mary's example is to do the opposite. Accept and try to live with what life gives us.

The first reading and the Gospel can be contrasted. God's will and inscrutability are everywhere evident. King David wishes to build a concrete building to house the sacred meeting place of the Jews and their God, where the sacred scrolls are to be kept. But the Lord tells him not to worry about it, that he the Lord will provide a house for him in the form of a dynasty. In the Gospel God is shown constructing the last rooms of the promised dynasty through the person of Mary. In her will grow the crowning point and the cornerstone for the new covenant.

Discuss with the children ways in which we can say yes in our own lives. Situations where they are asked to do something for someone else is one simple and common occasion when practising saying yes is possible. To say yes shows faith and confidence in the person we are saying yes to.

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, come into our hearts this Christmas so that we will be the place where you live forever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING

Romans 16:25-27

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

- Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 47

God is king of all the earth!

(or another suitable response known by the children)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

-

Luke 1:26 -38

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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 happy hearts let us call upon our loving God for our needs:

- For the Church, model of truth and justice. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.
- That people everywhere will have a growing respect for all of creation. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.
- For peace in our country between people of different cultures and beliefs. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will be welcoming to new people in our lives. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

O God you heal the broken hearted, pour your healing grace on us and on 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.

Notes

The Birth of the Lord

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





CHRISTMAS TIME

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



First Reading

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

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

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 you 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 recognize 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 you 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:

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. 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

Reader Sirach 3:2-6
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)*

Reader Colossians 3:12 - 17
The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Alleluia, alleluia.

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.

Notes

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

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 progresses 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:

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 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
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)

Alleluia, alleluia.

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.

Notes

Readings

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?

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.

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

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 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 stand in a circle while the leader sprinkles them with water as a sign of their baptism and speaks over them the words that God spoke over Jesus when he was baptised: "Each one of you is my own dear child. I am pleased with you."

Background to the Readings

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 symbolizes 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

Reader

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

PSALM

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

SECOND READING (if included)

Reader

Acts 10:34-38
The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (Sing)

Alleluia, alleluia.

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.

Notes



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 was tested by temptations. Today we read how he went into the desert to pray for forty days. Today, we too begin our forty day period of prayer called Lent. It is a little like going into the desert with Jesus.



Gospel

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Right away God's Spirit made Jesus go into the desert. He stayed there for forty days while Satan tested him. Jesus was with the wild animals, but angels took care of him.

After John was arrested Jesus went to Galilee and told the good news that comes from God. He said, "The time has come! God's kingdom will soon be here. Turn back to God and believe the good news!"

The Gospel of the Lord.

Mark 1:12-15

First Reading:

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS

God told Noah and his sons; "I am going to make a solemn promise to you and to all who will live after you. This includes the birds and animals that came out of the boat. I promise every living creature on earth that the earth and those living on it will never again be destroyed by a flood.

"The rainbow that I have put in the sky will be my sign to you and to every living creature on earth. It will tell you that I will keep this solemn promise forever. When I send clouds to cover the earth, and the rainbow appears in the sky, I will remember my promise to you and to all other living creatures. Never again will I let flood waters destroy all life."

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm:
Response

Psalms 25

Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.

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.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Violet cloth, Lectionary, a candle, cards decorated with a rainbow and pens, desert sand and stones.

Images from the readings

- Desert
- Wild animals
- Angels
- Testing
- Good News
- God's Kingdom
- Rainbow
- Promise

Discussion Points

In the First Reading what is the sign God promised to Noah as a reminder of the agreement between God and his people? What does God promise in the agreement?
What made Jesus go into the desert? How long was he there? What happened to him while he was there? When Jesus left the desert what did he do? What did Jesus ask us to do? What do you think Jesus wants us to change in our lives? How can we show that we believe in Jesus? What is the Good News that Jesus asks us to believe in?
All of us can change for the better but it doesn't happen over night, help the children to understand this. The important thing is to try to change for the better and to keep asking for God's help. Remember God's agreement with us, that we will not be abandoned. Lent is a special time when we make a special effort to change our lives. Focus on the children's lives and the small, but real ways they can try.

Act of Worship

Invite the children to take a card and write down a promise for a small change in response to God's promises to us. They can take it home and remember it during the week.

Background to the Readings

The covenant with Noah is the first described in the O.T. It is unconditional and is marked by a natural phenomenon.
Mark's account of the debate between Jesus and Satan contrasts in its brevity with that in Matthew(4:1-13) and Luke(4:1-11) but it has the same idea of the Son of God overcoming testing by Satan before beginning his public ministry.
The forty days of testing echoes that undergone by Moses(Exodus34:28) and Elijah(1Kings19:8) In Jewish tradition Satan serves as a leader of opposition to God's people. The lines "After John was arrested...."(CEV) foreshadow Jesus own fate. Jesus preaches about God's future display of power and judgement - the future establishment of God's rule over all creation is said to have drawn near. God's kingdom will demand a reorienting of life. "...good news" relates Jesus' teaching to post Easter faith.

Reflection for Leaders

Our universe, and more especially, our world has death, resurrection and renewal as its very core, continuous change is a part of its nature. Lent, if you like, is a celebration of change, of turning back, of renewing and reviewing, of turning over a new leaf. A time of looking towards death, a big change, a major renewal to look forward to and to prepare for, a time to remember the rainbow and our part in the covenant. Turn away from our idols, our preoccupations, our crutches, anything that we have become accustomed to using as props and supports and turn back to God. Even the pursuit of knowledge and learning is a distraction. Practice acts of charity on yourself this lent, reign in the excesses you allow yourself, begin to take account of your spiritual life. Talk to someone about where you are at spiritually, make this a regular part of you spiritual housekeeping, find a spiritual friend.

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 loving God, by our baptism you have called us to be your children. Help us to share with those we meet, our friends and family the hope and faith you have given us.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader:

Genesis 9:8-15

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 25

Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.

(or another suitable response known by the children)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL

Mark 1:12-15

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
□ 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 leader notes for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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: Inspired by today's readings let us call upon our loving God for our needs:

- For the Church that the spirit of God will drive it into every place on earth.
Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- That everyone will have someone to care for them when they need the help of others. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- For those who suffer at the hands of the unjust and the brutal. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- That the spirit of Lent will live in us. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

O God you show us the love that is in others, send your love upon us and those for whom we pray through Christ our Lord.

All:

Amen

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

Notes

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.



First Reading: A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and Sisters:

What can we say about all this? If God is on our side, can anyone be against 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

Responsorial Psalm:
Response:

Psalms 103

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 is merciful! He is kind and patient, and his love never fails.
How great is God's love for all who worship him? Greater than the distance between heaven and earth!

Gospel

Mark 9:2-10

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him and went up on a high mountain, where they could be alone. There in front of the disciples, Jesus was completely changed. And his clothes became much whiter than any bleach on earth could make them. Then Moses and Elijah were there talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, "Teacher, 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 and the others were terribly frightened, and he did not know what he was talking about.

The shadow of a cloud passed over and covered them. From the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, and I love him. Listen to what he says!" At once the disciples looked around, but they saw only Jesus.

As Jesus and his disciples were coming down the mountain, he told them not to say a word about what they had seen, until the Son of Man had been raised from death. So they kept it to themselves. But they wondered what he meant by the words "raised from death."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

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

Images from the Readings

- High Mountain
- Three tents
- God on our side
- Cloud
- Listen to him

Discussion

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 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, being able to see attributes in someone that you had preciously 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, we want to do your will for us, but often we find it too difficult. When you tell us in our hearts what we should do give us the courage to say yes. Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader: Romans 8: 31, 38-39
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)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

Mark 9:2-10
A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 and faith in our hearts let us pray to God who has owned us from the beginning for our needs:

- For the Church the sign of God in the world, that the spirit will be seen to live strongly there. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For the poor of the world, for those who have nothing. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will take to our hearts people of every nation, especially the poor. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For the gift of patience. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

Leader: Loving and eternal God, you are all seeing and knowing, bless us and those for whom we pray in hope, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

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

Notes

Readings

Third Sunday of Lent

Violet

Have you ever felt very angry because you knew something was wrong? Today we read about Jesus being angry at people who were treating others unfairly and doing so in God's house.

This is one of the very rare times in Jesus' life that we see him angry.



Gospel:

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Not long before the Jewish festival of Passover, Jesus went to Jerusalem. There he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves in the temple. He also saw moneychangers sitting at their tables. So he took some rope and made a whip. Then he chased everyone out of the temple, together with their sheep and cattle. He turned over the tables of the moneychangers and scattered their coins. Jesus said to the people who had been selling doves, "Get those doves out of here! Don't make my Father's house a marketplace."

The disciples then remembered that the Scriptures say, "My love for your house burns in me like a fire." The Jewish leaders asked Jesus, "What miracle will you work to show us why you have done this?"

"Destroy this temple," Jesus answered, "and in three days I will build it again!" The Leaders replied, "It took forty-six years to build this temple. What makes you think you can rebuild it in three days?" But Jesus was talking about his body as a temple. And when he was raised from death, his disciples remembered what he had told them. Then they believed the Scriptures and the words of Jesus.

The Gospel of the Lord.

John 2:13-22

First Reading:

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF EXODUS

The Lord gave Moses these commandments:

I am the Lord your God.

I brought you out of Egypt, where you were slaves. Do not worship any god except me.

Do not misuse my name. I am the Lord your God, and I will punish anyone who misuses my name.

Remember that the Sabbath Day belongs to me.

Respect your father and your mother, and you will live a long time in the land that I am giving you.

Do not murder.

Be faithful in marriage.

Do not steal.

Do not tell lies about others.

Do not want what belongs to someone else.

Do not want anyone's house or wife or slaves or cattle or donkeys or anything else.

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm:

Response

Psalms 19

Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.

The law of the Lord is perfect; it gives us new life.

His teachings last forever, and they give wisdom to ordinary people.

The Lord's instruction is right; it makes our hearts glad.

His commands shine brightly, and they give us light.

All of his decisions are correct and fair.

They are worth more than the finest gold.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Violet cloth, Lectionary, a candle

Images from the Readings

- A market
- Love for the house of God
- Law
- Commandment

Discussion Points

This is a difficult text for the children to work with so staying at the literal level might be necessary, depending on the age of the children. After you've read today's Gospel to the children questions might be along these lines - Why do you think Jesus was upset by what the people were doing in the temple? How did he show he was angry? What did he say? Why do you think we have the Ten Commandments? (Try to keep positive about the Ten Commandments - by keeping them we show our love of God and our neighbour - and bring the commandments themselves down to the level of the children e.g.. Thou shalt not kill. - You can kill another person by starving them of attention, by ignoring them.)

Explain to the children that, in the time of Jesus, people saw sacrifice as a gift of something to God and usually this was a bird or a small animal that they bought at the Temple. The people selling the birds and animals were being dishonest and taking more money than they should have and this cheating and greediness upset Jesus and caused his anger. It may be a good opportunity to explore the emotion of anger and explain how at times our anger can be helpful if it leads us to speak out against injustice.

Act of Worship

Pray together:

Jesus, my life is filled with lots of thoughts, lots of words and lots of activities.

Please show me which of them are good and which are not,

so I can be like God's Temple, empty of anything wrong and filled with your love.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

In the readings today we have the law being given to Moses, the temple cleared of traders by Jesus and Jesus saying that he knows what is in the hearts of people without being told.

Rules and regulations are a part of our life almost from the moment we can first comprehend. Usually they are focused on our own safety and our parents are the law givers. Later they become more focused on the rights of others and on how we are to behave towards them. Later still the civil laws of our country impinge on our lives and liberty and for some international laws also become relevant. So for the children it is easy to put today's first reading into the broader context of the rules and regulations that govern all the dealings and relationships we have with another person. You might discuss these with them and the fact that the laws handed down from Moses while being laws that governed Israel's relationship with God they were soon broadened to cover all aspects of living, the civil laws and God's laws combined.

In today's Gospel Jesus becomes angry when he sees the temple, the house of God, used for activities that do not properly belong there. In cases like this we might use a blessing ceremony to re-dedicate a holy place that has been desecrated explain this to the children. These rites of restoration and blessing can be quite simple like making friends after a quarrel, the act of shaking hands or embracing.

Reflection for Leaders

"I am the Lord your God....you shall have no gods except me," are perhaps the most important words of today's first reading. Our God is an impassioned and covetous God, a God who demands our hearts - our fickle human hearts, hearts that are often so easily distracted and carried away by the ways of the world and the present. Thus we are once again reminded of the cry of lent "Turn away from sin, turn back to God." - Stay faithful, be faithful, return to the Word of God for your sustenance and ignore the call of the world. The happenings in the Temple turned into marketplace show us what the results are of a love of God that has lost sight of the neighbour. The Ten Commandments recognise our dependence on God and the rights of our neighbour. By keeping them we can in a positive way show our love for God and our neighbour.

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, you have shown us how you want us to live our lives. You have given us your love and your law. Help us to remember that when we obey the rules handed on to us by our parents we are obeying you. Amen.

FIRST READING Exodus 20:1-17
Reader: The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 18
 Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.
(*or another suitable response known by the children*)

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

GOSPEL John 2:13-25
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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 trust let us ask God for our needs and the needs of the world.
- For the Church, that everywhere the lost and the outcasts will make it their home. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
 - For an end to starvation and suffering for lack of food. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
 - That parents everywhere will lead their children gently and with care. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
 - That all children may be blessed with a love for each other. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord of love and justice, hear with compassion our prayers, which we make through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Notes

Readings

Fourth Sunday of Lent

First Reading

A READING OF THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

Brothers and sisters:

God was merciful! We were dead because of our sins, but God loved us so much that he made us alive with Christ, and God's kindness is what saves you.

God raised us from death to life with Christ Jesus, and he has given us a place beside Christ in heaven above. God did this so that in the future world he could show how truly good and kind he is to us because of what Christ Jesus has done.

You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God's gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own. It isn't something you have earned, so there is nothing you can brag about.

God planned for us to do good things and to live as he has always wanted us to live. That's why he sent Christ to make us what we are.

The Word of the Lord.

Violet

Have you ever rescued another person or an animal who got badly hurt? Have you ever given anyone a second chance after they had messed things up for you? Today we hear how God loves to rescue people and give them second chances.



Responsorial Psalm Response

Psalms 25

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.

Please, Lord, remember, you have always been patient and kind. Show how truly kind you are and remember me.

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.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Violet cloth, Lectionary, a candle and a red cross on a white background or a St John Ambulance cross.

Images from the Word

- Be saved
- Gift
- Earned
- Be condemned

Discussion Points

Ask the children for reactions about the readings and build on these. If some help is needed, ask the following questions.

Has anyone ever tried to rescue a bird or a worm, dog, cat, snail, and invite one or two of these stories to be told? Children, particularly, are ready to rescue small creatures, even if the hope of recovery seems slight. Adults too are good at doing such rescues. We think it's worth having paramedics to race to where someone has had an accident and to try and save someone's life.

Whenever we do this we behave like God our Father. It is God's character to want to rescue and save. God never gives up on us, why not? The cross is the symbol that tells us that God stays with us until the very end.

Act of Worship

Have a cross set up and invite the children to touch it while someone prays the following prayer.

"Thank you for loving us and staying with us."
"Help us to stay with you."

Background to the Readings for Leaders

In today's Old Testament passage (2Chr 36:14-16, 19-23) the patient mercy of God is carefully chronicled. Over and over again the people act in ways which justify condemnation, yet God sends messenger after messenger to lead them back to repentance. Repeatedly the messengers are rejected until the course of history wakes the people up to their complicity in events.

God however, never gives up on us. As Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians, we are God's work of art., and it is only through his grace that we can be saved. The coming of Jesus proves that God is not out to condemn us. Today's Gospel reading emphasizes that God saves through love rather than condemnation. Any image of God as fierce, judgmental and condemning is a false one set up by those with unhealed condemnation in their own hearts.

Reflection for Leaders

Today's readings are not easily understood by the children so try to give them the sense of what is there. There is in the readings today a certain sense of joy and thanksgiving for the saving love of a merciful God. So we have drawn for us in the first reading a picture of the justice of the saving God, the faithful are saved the unfaithful destroyed. In the second reading the message is the same the imagery used that of life and death. "... We were dead because of our sins, but God loved us so much that he made us alive..." (CEV). The saving God shows mercy to the faithful and unfaithful alike. He brings those who were dead because of sin back to life through Christ, who is the light of life to those who believe.

Think about dark and light, think about the expression "I saw the light" think of some time of darkness in your life, like grief, anger, addiction or illness, how and when did light enter your darkness?

Reflect on what God's life-giving love does for us weak, sinful humans and on our joyful obligation in faith and hope to feed, clothe, shelter, and visit those in need.

We do not earn God's love or mercy; it is something that is there, a free gift for the taking, the fruits of faith. "...It is by grace that we are saved, not by anything we ourselves have done. We have to be open to God's work in our lives, yes God's love is always there ready and waiting for us and we have a part to play. We say yes to opportunities to grow God's love in our lives. This is God's free gift..." (Second Reading) all we can do is accept or reject the love and forgiveness God offers.

God doesn't stop loving us if we fail or do wrong or live as if there is no God. God is always there, is constant.

Liturgy Outline

Fourth Sunday of Lent

GOSPEL
Minister of the Word:
 at the end of the Gospel:
Minister of the Word:

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John.
Glory to you, Lord.
The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus 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, when we were baptised you called us to be your children, to be your light in the world so that others would see us and know of your love. Help us to be a light of faith and hope for others to see. Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader:
 Ephesians 2:1-10
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)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 joyful hearts let us pray to God for our needs:

- For the Church, the sign of God's love in the world, that all people will be drawn in and welcomed. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That people of all races live together in peace and harmony. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For the sick, the weak and the elderly. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For forgiveness, that we may give it and receive it. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

Ever loving God, you show love your people, send your love into our lives and the lives of those for whom we pray in faith through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Notes

Readings

Fifth Sunday of Lent

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

The Lord says, "The time is coming when I will make a new agreement with the people of Israel and Judah. It will be different from the agreement that I made with their ancestors, when I led them out of Egypt. Although I was their God, they broke their agreement with me.

"This is the agreement that I, the Lord, will make with the people of Israel: I will write my laws on their hearts and minds. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

"No longer will they have to teach each other to obey me. I, the Lord, promise that all of them will obey me, no matter who they are. I will forgive their sins and forget the evil things they have done."

The Word of the Lord.



Violet

Today we hear Jesus tell a story about wheat and how it can live in a different way after it has died or broken down.

Responsorial Psalm Response

Psalm 51

Create a clean heart in me, O God.

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!

Gospel

John 12:24-26

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Jesus said to his disciples: "I tell you for certain that a grain of wheat that falls on the ground will never be more than one grain unless it dies. But if it dies, it will produce lots of wheat.

"If you love your life, you will lose it. If you give it up in this world, you will be given eternal life.

"If you serve me, you must go with me. My servants will be with me wherever I am. If you serve me, my Father will honor you."

The Gospel of the Lord.



Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus:

Violet cloth, Lectionary, Candle, Bowl of wheat grains.

Images from the Readings

- Law
- Agreement
- Heart
- Grain of Wheat
- Losing – Gaining

Discussion points:

In the First Reading how does the writer describe the relationship between God and the people? How is it going to be different in the future? Where will the new agreement be written? What does God promise in the new covenant? Seeds when planted change, what do they change into? How can the story of the seed apply in your life today? Just as the seed is not a seed any more, once it is sprouted and grown into a plant or tree so too do you change when you say yes to the light of God's love in you.

Lead the children to understand that Jesus is using rich imagery in today's Gospel in order to make his point. The seed does not die, but appears to die, as it shrivels up to give life to the shoots as they grow. Jesus is telling us that we need to be like the grain of wheat – not to physically die for others (although people have done this) but rather, to put others and their needs first, so to 'die to ourselves' in order to serve others. Jesus says that when we think of others before ourselves we are like the grain of wheat that helps to provide a rich harvest.

Act of Worship

Sing the chorus of *Unless a Grain of Wheat* (Gather Australia 500) together several times.

Background to the Readings

For the Israelites the heart was the centre of human intelligence and will power. For Jeremiah sin had been second nature to the people of God, and the very absence of heart in the covenant explained why obedience to God was never realised. Only a conversion of heart will lead to an eternal covenant, one that cannot be broken.

Reflection on the Readings

In the First Reading today the writer draws a picture for us of the relationship the Lord has with the people "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel". The new covenant that Jeremiah is prophesying for the people of God he describes as being unlike the old one "...where I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt my covenant which they broke, though I was married to them...." And the bond which Jeremiah here describes is a close physical bond which stretches back to God the creator in the Genesis narrative. The new covenant though is to be different "... I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people." The image of a loving God possessive and painted in very human terms emerges from this writing by the prophet. So during these days of lent, of preparation, of reminding ourselves of the constancy and the mercy of our Creator God we can echo the words of the psalmist

"A new heart create for me, O God,
put a steadfast spirit within me."

"Unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies it bears much fruit."

"...it remains alone...."

The whole purpose of Jesus' existence is to redeem us through Calvary and his life. The law and covenant that Jeremiah wanted replaced, that was written on stone and had been handed down from Moses was to be rewritten in the hearts of the people because, as Jeremiah saw, unless the covenant and the law of God are taken to heart conversion from sin is impossible.

Jesus by his message and life that speaks to the hearts of all people has become the archetype for that conversion of heart. And the message is the message of today's Gospel- unless you die to yourself you will not have life in you and so the call of Lent for a change of heart, a turning back to God is echoed once more. It is Christ's journey to death and resurrection that draws us to him, we are, in a way, the fruits of that journey and within us is implanted its seed.

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

Liturgy Outline

Fifth Sunday of Lent

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word:
□ The Gospel of the Lord.
□ Praise to you, Lord Jesus 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:
Lord our God, you want to be as close to us as a mother is.
Help us to be open to your saving help in our lives. Amen.

FIRST READING

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Reader:
□ The Word of the Lord.
□ Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalms 51

□ Create a clean heart in me, O God.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

□ (Sing)
Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

□ 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 previous page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 trust and hope let us call upon our loving God for our needs:

- For the Church, home of the broken hearted, that they will be welcomed and find a place within. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- For the people of small countries, that they will not be made to suffer domination by their neighbours. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- For those who are without friends, that we will care for them. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- For the grace to share what possessions and gifts we have with others. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.

Leader: Loving and constant God, you see our needs and our weakness, bless us and those for whom we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

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

Notes

Readings

Passion (Palm) Sunday

Isaiah 50:6-7

First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

I let them beat my back and pull out my beard. I didn't turn aside when they made fun of me and spit in my face.

But the Lord God keeps me from being embarrassed. And I refuse to give up, because I know I will never be ashamed.

The Word of the Lord.

Red

It is recommended that children remain with the whole assembly today

The Jews were waiting for a king to lead them against the Romans and make them free again. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he was welcomed as this king, but he came as a king of peace and not to bring war.



THE PROCESSION WITH PALMS

Gospel

Mark 11:1-10

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus and his disciples reached Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives. When they were getting close to Jerusalem, Jesus sent two of them on ahead. He told them, "Go into the next village. As soon as you enter it, you will find a young donkey that has never been ridden. Untie the donkey and bring it here. If anyone asks why you are doing that, say, 'The lord needs it and will soon bring it back.'" The disciples left and found the donkey tied near a door that faced the street. While they were untying it, some of the people standing there asked, "Why are you untying the donkey?" They told them what Jesus had said, and the people let them take it. The disciples led the donkey to Jesus. They put some of their clothes on its back, and Jesus got on. Many people spread clothes on the road, while others went to cut branches from the fields.

In front of Jesus and behind him, people went along shouting, "Hosanna! God bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord! God bless the coming kingdom of our ancestor David. Hosanna to God in heaven above!"

The Gospel of the Lord.

MASS

Responsorial Psalm

Psalms 22

Response

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Everyone who sees me makes fun and sneers.

They shake their heads, and say, "Trust the Lord!

If you are his favorite, let him protect you and keep you safe."

My enemies have tied up my hands and my feet.

I can count all my bones!

They took my clothes and gambled for them.

Don't stay far away, Lord! My strength comes from you, so hurry and help.

And when your people meet, I will praise you, Lord.



Gospel

Mark 15:1-39

THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO MARK

•Early in the morning the chief priests, the nation's leaders, and the teachers of the law of Moses met together with the whole Jewish council. They tied up Jesus and led him off to Pilate.

He asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"Those are your words," Jesus answered.

The chief priests brought many charges against Jesus. Then Pilate questioned him again, "Don't you have anything to say? Don't you hear what crimes they say you have done?" But Jesus did not answer, and Pilate was amazed.

•During Passover, Pilate always freed one prisoner chosen by the people. And at that time there was a prisoner named Barabbas. He and some others had been arrested for murder during a riot. The Jewish people now came and asked Pilate to set a prisoner free, just as he usually did.

Pilate asked them, "Do you want me to free the king of the Jews?" Pilate knew that the chief priests had brought Jesus to him because they were jealous.

But the chief priests told the crowd to ask Pilate to free Barabbas. Then Pilate asked the crowd, "What do you want me to do with this man you say is the king of the Jews?"

They yelled, "Nail him to a cross!"

Pilate asked, "But what crime has he done?"

"Nail him to a cross!" they yelled even louder.

Pilate wanted to please the crowd. So he set Barabbas free. Then he ordered his soldiers to beat Jesus with a whip and nail him to a cross.

•The soldiers led Jesus inside the courtyard of the fortress and called together the rest of the troops. They put a purple robe on him, and on his head they placed a crown that they had made out of thorn branches. They made fun of Jesus and shouted, "Hey, you king of the Jews!" Then they beat him on the head with a stick. They spit on him and kneeled down and pretended to worship him.

When the soldiers had finished making fun of Jesus, they took off the purple robe. They put his own clothes back on him and led him off to be nailed to a cross. Simon from Cyrene happened to be coming in from a farm, and they forced him to carry Jesus' cross.

Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus.

•The soldiers took Jesus to Golgotha, which means "Place of a Skull." There they gave him some wine mixed with a drug to ease the pain, but he refused to drink it. They nailed Jesus to a cross and gambled to see who would get his clothes. It was about nine o'clock in the morning when they nailed him to the cross. On it was a sign that told why he was nailed there. It read, "This is 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. So the Scriptures came true which say, "He was accused of being a criminal."

People who passed by said terrible things about Jesus. They shook their heads and shouted, "Ha! So you're the one who claimed you could tear down the temple and build it again in three days. Save yourself and come down from the cross!"

The chief priests and the teachers of the law of Moses also made fun of Jesus. They said to each other, "He saved others, but he can't save himself. If he is the Messiah, the king of Israel, let him come down from the cross! Then we will see and believe." The two criminals also said cruel things to Jesus.

•About noon the sky turned dark and stayed that way until around three o'clock. Then about that time Jesus shouted,

"Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?"

Some of the people standing there heard Jesus and said, "He is calling for Elijah." One of them ran and grabbed a sponge. After he had soaked it in wine, he put it on a stick and held it up to Jesus. He said, "Let's wait and see if Elijah will come and take him down!"

Jesus shouted and then he died.

At once the curtain in the temple tore in two from top to bottom.

A Roman army officer was standing in front of Jesus. When the officer saw how Jesus died, he said, "This man really was the Son of God!"

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 B divide the shorter form of Mark 15:1-39 (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: 15:1-5; Reader B: 15:6-15; Reader C: 15:16-21; Reader D: 15:22-32; Reader E: 15:33-39 (as marked with •)

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's' 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 for Leaders

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

Reader Isaiah 50: 6-7
 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)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (Sing)

Glory and praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

GOSPEL

Mark 15:1 -39

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark
 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.
 Amen

All:

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

Notes

Easter Sunday

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





EASTER TIME

Readings

Second Sunday of Easter

White or Gold

Sometimes people use the saying, "seeing is believing," to mean that it is easier to believe something when you have seen it with your own eyes than not. Thomas would not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead without seeing it for himself.



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:

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The followers of Jesus all felt the same way about everything. None of them claimed that their belongings were their own, and they shared everything they had with each other.

In a powerful way the apostles told everyone that the Lord Jesus was now alive. God greatly blessed his followers, and no one went in need of anything. Everyone who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles. Then they would give the money to anyone who needed it.

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 it is amazing to us.

This day belongs to the Lord! Let's celebrate and be glad today.

Second Reading:

1 John 5:1-3

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

Beloved: If we believe that Jesus is truly Christ, we are God's children. Everyone who loves the Father will also love his children. If we love and obey God, we know that we will love his children. We show our love for God by obeying his commandments, and they are not hard to follow.

The Word of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus:

White cloth, Lectionary, Candle, a picture of a hand

Images from the Readings

- Jesus Appeared
- Peace
- Breathed
- A week
- Faith
- Hands, touch

Discussion Points

Invite the children to share some experience of a time when they believed in something (e.g., an event at school or a friend's sporting achievement), even though they were not there to see it occur. Is this easy to do? Encourage the children to put themselves into today's Gospel story. Discuss: How might you have told Thomas about Jesus' appearance?

Would you believe the story if you were Thomas? What did Jesus say when he came in? What did Jesus say to Thomas? What did Thomas call Jesus?

Like Thomas, sometimes it is difficult for us to believe in something or someone we have not seen but we believe because we trust the people who tell us. People come to believe in Jesus by what we say and do and how we live our lives as disciples of his.

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, You have blessed us with faith and hope in you.
Help us to be people who are ever hopeful and cheerful knowing your love for us. Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader:

Acts 4:32-35
The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 118
Give thanks to God for he is good, his love is everlasting.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader:

(if included) 1 John 5:1-6
The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

John 20:19-31

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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 faith and hope in our hearts let us call upon our loving God for our needs:

- For the Church home of those who hope, that everyone who enters will be welcomed. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That there will be peace so that all might live as children of the light. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For those who have no one who cares for them and no friends. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will believe in Jesus and follow his way even when the going gets tough. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

God of light and peace, you bring hope to sinners bless us and those for whom we pray through Jesus our risen Lord.
Amen.

All:

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

Notes

Readings

Third Sunday of Easter

White

Today we hear a story about how Jesus showed himself to the disciples after the resurrection so that they could believe the good news that he was really alive again. He even eats some food to show them that he really is flesh and bone.



Gospel:

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

The disciples from Emmaus told what happened on the road and how they knew he was the Lord when he broke the bread.

While Jesus' disciples were talking about what had happened, Jesus appeared to them and said, "May God give you peace!" They were frightened and terrified because they thought they were seeing a ghost.

But Jesus said, "Why are you so frightened? Why do you doubt?"

Look at my hands and feet and see who I am! Touch me and find out for yourselves. Ghosts don't have flesh and bones as you see I have."

After Jesus said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. The disciples were so glad and amazed that they could not believe it.

Jesus then asked them, "Do you have something to eat?" They gave him a piece of baked fish. He took it and ate it as they watched.

Jesus said to them, "While I was still with you, I told you that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Books of the Prophets, and in the Psalms had to happen."

Then he helped them understand the Scriptures. He told them: "The Scriptures say that the Messiah must suffer, then three days later he will rise from death. They also say that all people of every nation must be told in my name to turn to God, in order to be forgiven. So beginning in Jerusalem, you must tell everything that has happened."

The Gospel of the Lord.

First Reading:

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Peter told the people: "The God that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and our ancestors worshipped has brought honour to his Servant Jesus. He is the one you betrayed. You turned against him when he was being tried by Pilate, even though Pilate wanted to set him free.

"You rejected Jesus, who was holy and good. You asked for a murderer to be set free, and you killed the one who leads people to life. But God raised him from death, and all of us can tell you what he has done.

"My friends, I am sure, that you and your leaders didn't know what you were doing. But God had his prophets tell that his Messiah would suffer, and now he has kept that promise. So turn to God! Give up your sins, and you will be forgiven."

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm:
Response

Psalm 4

Lord, let your face shine on us.

You are my God and protector.

Please answer my prayer.

Now have pity and listen as I pray.

The Lord has chosen everyone who is faithful to be his very own, and he answers my prayers.

Let your kindness, Lord, shine brightly on us.

You brought me happiness.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, candle, Lectionary, Cross with a pathway of stones from it.

Images from the Readings

- Terrified
- Ghost
- Flesh and bone
- Forgiven
- The one who leads people to life

Points for Discussion

Ask the children what they heard, what stood out for them and elicit answers to the following questions.

What did Jesus say to his followers when he appeared to them? What did he say the disciples must do? How do you think they would have felt after Jesus had said this to them? How do we feel when we are forgiven? How can we bring Jesus' peace and forgiveness to others? How can you help to make your home a place of peace? When can Jesus be really present in your life? Have you ever felt God's presence?

Act of Worship

Pray the following prayer with the children:

Jesus, you bring us peace and forgiveness

All: For this we thank you

Jesus, you are holy and good

All: For this we praise you

Jesus, you lead us to life

All: For this we thank you

Invite the children to share the sign of peace with each other.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

In the Gospel of Luke all the events of Easter run into one another and the whole of Chapter 24 should really be read as a continuous narrative. Beginning with the discovery of the empty tomb, the resurrection narrative follows the disciples as they move away from what had happened in Jerusalem, but they encounter the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread. In witnessing to this, Christ is present among them again until he finally returns to the Father.

Luke also wrote the Acts of the Apostles. His Gospel is the story of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem to the cross and resurrection. Acts is the story of the Gospel spreading from Jerusalem to 'all the nations.'

Reflection for Leaders

The strong, confident and sure words of Peter in the First Reading and the measured and direct words of John in the Second contrast quite dramatically with the picture of "frightened and terrified" followers whom Jesus appears to in the locked room. Something dramatic, a radical transformation, happened to these followers between their cowering in fear behind locked and bolted doors and the forthright and courageous preaching of Peter a short time later. What had happened. Somehow the specially chosen disciples changed from impossibly thick, spineless directionless dropouts, into vital, erudite supermen and women virtually overnight. How did this happen. Something had changed, somehow the power of the risen Christ was absorbed by these people. That power filled them and drove them out.

Shouldn't it be the same for us? Made fearless by the power of our risen Christ are we not driven by an inner force to reach out to others? Prompted to shout about it? So what do we in fact do? Jesus rose from the dead to bring peace and forgiveness to others. When we do that we show that Jesus is here with us.

We are invited to be witnesses to our faith in the risen Lord and challenged to go out and call others to change their lives and to believe. And for those who seek forgiveness Peter preaches "now change your lives....be forgiven."

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, called by Jesus and the early Apostles to be forgiving, we ask you to help us to forgive the hurt that we feel and to ask forgiveness of those we hurt. Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader: Acts 3:12-19
 The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 4
 Lord, let your face shine on us.
 (or another suitable response known by the children)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Luke 24:36-48

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 previous page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 courage and faith let us call upon God for our needs for God listens to the voice of his people:

- That the Church throughout the world will have the wonder, joy, and freshness of the early Church. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- That those who have nothing will feel the love and care of the Church. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- That the people of Aotearoa New Zealand will recognise Jesus as their teacher, leader and saviour. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will love and care for others especially the poor. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

God of Resurrection and Life you care for your people who put their trust in you. Be mindful of our needs and the needs of those for whom we pray. Through Jesus our Lord.
 Amen.

All:

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

Notes

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 10:11-16

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Jesus said to his disciples: "I am the good shepherd, and the good shepherd gives up his life for his sheep.

"Hired workers are not like the shepherd. They don't own the sheep, and when they see a wolf coming, they run off and leave the sheep. Then the wolf attacks and scatters the flock.

"Hired workers run away because they don't care about the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and they know me. Just as the Father knows me, I know the Father, and I give up my life for my sheep.

"I have other sheep that are not in this sheep pen. I must bring them together too, when they hear my voice. Then there will be one flock of sheep and one shepherd."

The Gospel of the Lord.

First Reading:

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and told the nation's leaders and the elders: "You are questioning us today about a kind deed in which a crippled man was healed. But there is something we must tell you and everyone else in Israel. This man is standing here completely well because of the power of Jesus Christ from Nazareth. "You put Jesus to death on a cross, but God raised him to life. He is the stone that you builders thought was worthless, and now he is the most important stone of all. Only Jesus has the power to save! His name is the only one in all the world that can save anyone."

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm:
Response

Psalm 118

The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.

Tell the Lord
how thankful you are,
because he is kind
and always merciful.
I praise the Lord
for answering my prayers
and saving me.

The stone that the builders
tossed aside
has now become
the most important stone.
The Lord has done this,
and it is amazing to us.

Second Reading:

1 John 3:1-2

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

Beloved: Think how much the Father loves us. He loves us so much that he lets us be called his children, as we truly are. But since the people of this world did not know who Christ is, they don't know who we are.

My dear friends, we are already God's children, though what we will be has not yet been seen. But we do know that when Christ returns, we will be like him, because we will see him as he truly is.

The Word of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, Candle, a shepherd's crook or an image of a Bishop's crosier.

Images from the Word

- Shepherd
- Other sheep
- One flock
- Stone rejected
- Cornerstone

Discussion Points

What are some words we can use to describe Peter as he appears in the first reading? Courageous, brave, strong etc.

What are some words we can use to describe Jesus as the good shepherd? Caring, courageous, brave, loving etc.

You might ask the children the above questions and have coloured pieces of card ready on which to write their responses. The words (qualities) gathered can be discussed with the children in terms of how they feature in our lives or the lives of other people we know of living today.

What do you know about sheep and shepherds? Have you seen sheep with their shepherd? Jesus says that he wants us to listen to his voice: how do we listen to his voice today? Who tells you about the teachings and life of Jesus? Do you know who the shepherds in the Church are?

Act of Worship:

Sing together: Like a shepherd you feed your flock

And gather us lambs in your arms

Holding us carefully close to your heart

Leading us home. (*As One Voice 160*)

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The image divine-shepherd comes from the Hebrew Scriptures (Ezekiel34, Jeremiah23).

John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God, later the Lamb calls himself the Good Shepherd, he is both sheep and shepherd. In John's gospel Jesus' condemnation to death comes at the exact time that the Passover lambs are being prepared for slaughter. John the Baptist says the lamb "takes away the sins of the world" Shepherds say that their sheep's safety lies in their ability to recognise and follow the voice of their shepherd and nobody else's.

Reflection for Leaders:

The idea of the wandering figure of the good shepherd, anxiously tending his sheep to the point where he is willing to surrender his life for them, is the image Jesus uses about himself in today's Gospel. That mixture of tenderness and toughness, care and self sacrifice, is one that summarises his practice of leadership. To what sort of leadership do people respond best? Jesus' is not a leadership of detachment and defensiveness; rather it is a leadership of physical involvement and self-sacrificing love, in the good shepherd's love his own life matters less than that of his sheep. The good shepherd is not an image of religious authority that is eternally pleased with its own importance that is blind to the useless pain it causes in those it leads. It can be compared to a mother's love for her young, something that is free and unquestioned both by the mother and the one she nurtures. The authority of the shepherd costs the shepherd not the sheep. The image of the shepherd cannot be separated from how the shepherd actually cares for his own sheep. His concern is not untroubled; his courage not without bloodshed, his love is not detached. When we see how Jesus actually behaves as a leader, we see his tenderness and courage, he sorts out the lost and the least and the last. When he wanted to tell the people of a tender God he spoke of a shepherd who when he loses one of his sheep leaves the others and goes off in search of the lost one searching for it until he finds it and returning with it to the fold.

We know that a search is not automatic after a loss. Many losses are not even registered. Where there is no love, there is no loss. Some people are regarded as "no great loss" others are told to "get lost" But all of us hope that when we are lost someone somewhere, like the good shepherd, will be looking for us. All of us know people who have wandered away from the church, people who have no sense of belonging, who are lost. The children too know of fellow pupils at their school, children they play with who suffer a sense of not belonging anywhere. Often children pick this feeling up from their parents. How will they know they are welcome back if no one tells them? We can encourage the children to reach out to others by inviting one or two lost friends along to Children's Liturgy on Sunday.

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 the care you have for us we try to have for others. Help us to be people who care for others, especially those who feel lost and alone. Amen.

FIRST READING

Acts 4:5-12

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 117

The stone rejected by the builders has become the corner stone.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

(if included) 1 John 3:1-2

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

Glory to you, Lord.

John 10:11-18

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John.
Glory to you, Lord.

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word:

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to previous page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 our hearts let us ask God the one who cares for us for our needs:

- For the Church shelter for the homeless and the hope of the powerless. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For those who are hungry and are not fed. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That those with power over others lives will be loving and show they care. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For those who are left out of the things we do and those who have no friends. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

O God you are the shepherd of your people, in you we trust.
Remember us and grant your blessing on 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.

Notes

Readings

Fifth Sunday of Easter

White

Have you ever done any gardening and chopped branches of a plant or a tree because they were making the plant unhealthy? Today we read how Jesus compares himself to a vine and us to its branches. He tells us how we need to stay connected otherwise the branch could die.



Gospel:

John 15:1-5, 7-8

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Jesus said to his disciples:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts away every branch of mine that does not produce fruit. But he trims clean every branch that does produce fruit, so that it will produce even more fruit.

"You are already clean because of what I have said to you.

"Stay joined to me, and I will stay joined to you. Just as a branch cannot produce fruit unless it stays joined to the vine, you cannot produce fruit unless you stay joined to me.

"I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me.

"Stay joined to me and let my teachings become part of you. Then you can pray for whatever you want, and your prayer will be answered.

"When you become fruitful disciples of mine, my Father will be honoured."

The Gospel of the Lord.

First Reading:

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join the followers. But they were all afraid of him, because they did not believe he was a true follower.

Then Barnabas helped him by taking him to the apostles. He explained how on the road to Damascus, Saul had seen the Lord and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. Barnabas also said that when Saul was in Damascus, he had spoken bravely in the name of Jesus.

Saul moved about freely with the followers in Jerusalem and told everyone about the Lord.

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm:

Response

Psalm 22

I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.

Everyone on this earth will remember you, Lord
 People all over the world will turn and worship you.

In the future, everyone will worship and learn about you, our Lord.
 People not yet born will be told,
 "The Lord has saved us!"

Second Reading:

1 John 3:18

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

Children, you show love for others by truly helping them, and not merely by talking about it.

The Word of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, Candle, a vine or another kind of climber in a pot, a bowl of blessed water.

Images from the Word

- Branches
- Gardener
- Fruit
- Staying joined
- Vine

Discussion Points

We are part of the body of the Church, the branches or shoots of the vine, as long as we are attached to the roots or the branches, as soon as we become detached from the body or the rest of the vine we no longer get the food that flows through the body or through the branches of the vine.

The children might be asked to join hands in a circle, asked to close their eyes and to feel the life of the circle of people. Still with closed eyes ask them to let go of the hands they are holding and feel the difference between being physically attached to the group and being separated. You might make in discussion with the children the analogy between the circle and the body of the Church. When you are attached you feel the life of the whole body, the movement, the life, you feel strongly that you belong to the group. When you are no longer joined there is no ebb and flow of movement or life you are cut off from it and cannot feel it or benefit from it. Discuss the story of Jesus as the vine and ourselves as its branches.

What do you think Jesus is trying to tell us in the story of the vineyard? Why did he call himself the vine and us the branches? What did he mean? What can you do to produce lots of fruit? How can we stay joined to Jesus?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to bless themselves from a bowl of water that has been blessed. Explain that every time we do this we remember that through our Baptism we are connected to Jesus as a branch to a vine.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

When Saul had come to Jerusalem to join the disciples they were still very much on the defensive and were afraid of him and did not want to know him. But soon through the good interventions of Barnabas they allowed him to come and go amongst them preaching. Here is a picture of the young church finding its way. The community soon opened to Paul and when he got into trouble with the Greeks they closed ranks around him and moved him out of harms way to Tarsus. The Gospel develops the theme of the believing community. A vine puts out many branches, and all these different branches exist only in their connection to the vine. They share the same source of life. That makes them close relatives. The vineyard was one of the ancient images of the people of Israel, God's chosen people and God is the vine-dresser. In John's Gospel the term 'I am' has a special significance. When Moses encountered God on Mt Sinai, God revealed himself as 'I am who am'. Jesus reveals himself as Son of God in the use of this term and tells something of his mission: I am the living water, I am the good shepherd, I am the way, the truth and the life, I am the light of the world, I am the bread of life.

Reflection for Leaders

Jesus continues to speak to the disciples through imagery which they understood from their everyday experience and with symbols that come from their Jewish tradition. The vine is a staple part of Israel's agricultural life. It carries the idea of the life which flows into the branches from the thick stalk of the vine. Jesus becomes that giver of life and prosperity, but behind his life-giving presence is the Father. Like the vine-dresser, the Father must cut away anything which impedes that life or comes from a source that is not nourished from the 'true vine.' Jesus exists to make the Father known and so it must be with the disciples of Jesus. We must 'remain with Jesus' and thus make the Father known.

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 have given us the Church where we can grow as part of your body. Help us to understand and to grow to be as strong shoots attached to the Church's vine. Amen.

FIRST READING Acts 9:26-31
Reader: The Word of the Lord.
□ Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 22
□ I will praise you Lord, in the assembly of your people.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING (if included) 1 John 3:18
Reader: The Word of the Lord.
□ Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (Sing)
□ Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

John 15:1-8

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 previous page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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: Taking confidence from God's word in the readings we ask for our needs:

- For the Church, that it will be a place where people grow. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- That people who have power over others will have compassion grow in their hearts. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- For the sick, the hungry and those who are lonely. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will be of the growing part of the Lord's vine. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.

Leader: God, Keeper of the Vineyard, the One in whom we trust, hear the prayers we your children make to you. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Notes

Readings

Sixth Sunday of Easter

White

Jesus knew he would soon die and rise to new life – this was a sign of his love for everyone. He also knew his disciples would not understand the things that would happen, so he told them how much he loved them and asked them to share this love with others.



First Reading: Acts 10:25-26, 34-34, 44-48
A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
When Peter arrived, Cornelius greeted him. Then he knelt at Peter's feet and started worshipping him. But Peter took hold of him and said, "Stand up! I am nothing more than a human."

Peter then said, "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."

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit took control of everyone who was listening. Some Jewish followers of the Lord had come with Peter, and they were surprised that the Holy Spirit had been given to Gentiles. Now they were hearing Gentiles speaking unknown languages and praising God.

Peter said, "These Gentiles have been given the Holy Spirit, just as we have! I am certain that no one would dare stop us from baptizing them."

Peter ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and they asked him to stay on for a few days.

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 98

Response **The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.**

Sing a new song to the Lord

He has worked miracles, and with his own powerful arm, he has won the victory.

The Lord has shown the nations that he has the power to save and to bring justice.

God's saving power is seen everywhere on earth.

Tell everyone on this earth to sing happy songs in praise of the Lord.

Second Reading:

1 John 4:7-10

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

My dear friends, we must love each other. Love comes from God, and when we love each other, it shows that we have been given new life.

We are now God's children, and we know him.

God is love, and anyone who doesn't love others has never known him.

God showed his love for us when he sent his only Son into the world to give us life.

Real love is not our love for God, but his love for us. God sent his Son to be the sacrifice by which our sins are forgiven.

The Word of the Lord.

Gospel:

John 15:9-14

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Jesus said to his disciples: "I have loved you, just as my Father has loved me. So make sure that I keep on loving you. If you obey me, I will keep loving you, just as my Father keeps loving me, because I have obeyed him.

"I have told you this to make you as completely happy as I am. Now I tell you to love each other, as I have loved you. The greatest way to show love for friends is to die for them. And you are my friends, if you obey me."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Candle, Lectionary

Images from the Word

- Friends – Servants
- Gift of the Holy Spirit
- Obey
- Complete
- God is love

Discussion Points

Begin with a discussion that brings out the difference between servants and friends. The kind of things which might come up are the sense of involvement and belonging which friendship gives, compared with the distance and lack of co-operation in servants; the difference in how they feel valued, and what response is acceptable. In a reading from the Gospel of John that has many powerful phrases about the selfless love we are asked to have for each other the one that urges us to love as Jesus loved stands out as the most powerful. How did Jesus love? How does his life show how he loved? Collect the children's ideas and write them down in a list. Some suggestions: as friends, with affection, treating us seriously, understanding us, with honesty, with forgiveness, ready to put himself out for us, with faithfulness, consistently. Is this how we are treating other people? Or is it how we treat the people we like? As Christians we don't have the option to choose certain people to treat with God's love, while behaving how we feel with all the rest.

Act of Worship

Pray the following prayer together:

In our homes, at work and at school

Help us to love one another

In what we think and say and do

Help us to love one another

When there are arguments and when we disagree

Help us to love one another

When we are tired and not feeling our best

Help us to love one another

Every moment of every day, whether it's easy or hard,

Help us to love one another

Background to the Readings for Leaders

In John's Gospel there is no account of the last meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. Instead there is the account of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, an act of absolute service to others, and a long discourse of instruction on how they must conduct themselves in the future. This is known as the "Farewell Discourse" and today's reading is part of it.

Reflection for Leaders

In the reading from Acts we witness an extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which doesn't even wait for Peter to finish speaking. Not surprisingly, when you look back to what he had just been saying, you find once again that powerful truth about forgiveness, which Jesus had commissioned his disciples to tell everyone about. "Tell them they can be forgiven," he had said straight after the Resurrection. As Peter proclaims this, the little crowd of people in Cornelius' house, who are searching single-mindedly for God's truth, suddenly experience the rush of God's forgiving love, and the freedom it brings.

And this is the kind of love we are given as an example to follow. So much of what we name of love is actually to do with self-gratification and possession. It is tied up with our own need for fulfilment. But the love that Jesus talks about in today's Gospel is about obedience, willing co-operation, and sacrifice which produce joy.

We could quite easily misinterpret what Jesus says here. He is not saying that his love will depend on whether we obey or not.

That would be a love that is conditional. Obedience in the mind of Jesus is that surrender of will that can only flow from the absolute security of knowing ourselves loved and cherished by a God who wants the best for us and for those around us. Such surrender brings joy and freedom and a delight in 'obeying' commands and living the loving way.

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.

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 us with everlasting love. We want to love others selflessly too because of your love for us. Help us to live lives that show others your love. Amen.

FIRST READING

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

Reader:

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalms 98

The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

(if included) 1 John 4:7-10

Reader:

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

□ Glory to you, Lord.

John 15:9-17

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 previous page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 word and love of God let us pray for our needs:

- For the spirit of love to fill the Church in every country. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- For those who grieve for a loved one. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- That people everywhere will know us by our love for one another. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will care for the sick, the lonely and those without friends. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- For the spirit of gentleness in our lives. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

Loving and Faithful God, our hope and our salvation, pour forth your love on us and on those for whom we pray.
We ask this through Jesus our Lord.

All:

Amen.

Notes

Readings

Ascension of the Lord

White

The mission of the church is to evangelise. Our Gospel reading tells us that before Jesus left the disciples to be with God, his Father in heaven, he gave them a job to do. Go to every part of the world and tell everyone the Good News. This command is accompanied by the promise that Jesus will be with them always.



First Reading

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 standing there 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

Response

Psalm 47

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.

Gospel

Mark 16: 15-20

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus told his disciples: "Go and preach the good news to everyone in the world. Anyone who believes me and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe in me will be condemned.

Everyone who believes me will be able to do wonderful things. By using my name they will be able to force out demons, and they will speak new languages. They will handle snakes and will drink poison and not be hurt. They will also heal sick people by placing their hands on them."

After the Lord Jesus had said these things to the disciples he was taken back up to heaven where he sat at the right side of God. Then the disciples left and preached everywhere. The Lord was with them, and their miracles they worked proved that their message was true.

The Gospel of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle,

Images from the Readings

- Go
- Good News
- Believe
- Baptized
- Power

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: “What did you hear?” While we listen each child is given the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. You might begin general discussion by building on to the responses offered by the children. One way of expanding on their responses is by using some prepared questions like the following, to stimulate ideas.

How do we feel when someone we love very much has to leave and go away? How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus went to be with his father again? They were filled with great sadness because they knew they would not see Jesus again. Perhaps they felt lonely and afraid.

Jesus knew how they would be feeling so he made them a special promise that he would be with them always. Can you remember some of the different ways that Jesus had promised to be with his disciples in the Easter stories that we have shared? Through the power of the Holy Spirit, through the sharing of the bread and wine at the eucharistic meal and the wonderful things the disciples would be able to do in Jesus name. These are some of the ways that Jesus still shares himself with us today.

What did Jesus tell his disciples to do after he left them? Go out to every part of the world and tell everyone the good news, and to baptize people.

How/why were the disciples able to do this? They were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Remind the children that we also received the Holy Spirit when we were baptized: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. So we too have the power of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses for Jesus.

How can we do this? By the way we live our life; being obedient to our parents and teachers, being kind to our friends, caring for those who are sick or upset, standing up for a friend who is being bullied - try to keep the children focused on ideas truly possible for them at their age)

Act of Worship

Teach the children an echo creed (maybe 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

These final verses of Mark’s gospel were an addition to the original ending of the women at the empty tomb. They show that from the earliest times the disciples realized that even though Jesus was no longer physically with them, the Lord was working with them.

The word “apostle” comes from the Greek for ‘one who is sent out’ and is used of those who met the risen Lord. Indeed the apostles did go forth unhesitatingly and preached everywhere.

Mark uses vivid and dramatic figures of speech when referring to demons, snakes and poison to illustrate that those who believe in the good news of Jesus Christ and preach it can face all that threatens or destroys life and overcome it. This stewardship of life includes stewardship of all creation.

The confirmation of the presence of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit and the extraordinary signs and miracles shown by the apostles did not end with them. They shared what they had received with all those they baptized and they continued the work. We are the baptized of today and the same promises that Jesus made to the apostles then, belong to us now. You are literally preaching the good news to the children you gather with this Sunday.

Reflection for Leaders

Jesus sends out his disciple to continue his work of bringing good news. This reminds us that the “sending out” which occurs at every Mass. Not all of us can go to the whole world, but all of us are called to bring the good news wherever we are in our daily lives.

This call applies not only to people but to all ‘creation’. Are there areas where we can be ‘good news’ to others or for the earth? Do we need to revisit our commitment to the reconciliation with other people or to recycling? Can we reduce our consumerism, share with those in great need, reduce waste, plant a tree?

As we consider this feast – marking the end of one era and the beginning of another – we can reflect on those experiences of our lives where one chapter has closed and another has opened.

The task that Jesus asks of us may not be easy. There will be some who rejoice in the message, and others who will reject it. However Jesus’ presence with us will ensure that we can link into the power he has promised to continue the work.

What signs of hope accompany the work of the Church in the worlds today and the work that you are called to do?

Liturgy Outline

Feast of the 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:

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 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

Reader

Acts 1:8-11
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

(not included)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 16: 15-20

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark
□ 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 the new time in our history.
Let us pray to the Lord □ Lord hear our prayer
- That we 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
Amen

All:

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

Notes

Readings

PENTECOST SUNDAY**Red**

Today is a special feast for the Church. It is called 'Pentecost' because it is celebrated fifty days after the Passover. Pentecost is the birthday of the church. Think of the ways this story reminds you of a 'birthday celebration' as you listen to the readings. Can you hear any mention of gifts or happiness or something that reminds you of birthday candles?

**Gospel:**

John 20:19-23

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 sides. 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:****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 languages.

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, Prgia, Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya 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 for ever, that you will be pleased with what you have done.

Second Reading:

1 Cor 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 baptized 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

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 gifts and 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 having locked themselves in a room? How did they feel when Jesus suddenly appeared among them? What did Jesus want them to do?

Do you remember hearing this is the same message in another story we heard, not so long 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? Explore ways on which the children can forgive others. Help them to see that truly, if we (they) forgive someone, that person feels forgiven. If we refuse this, that person feels unforgiven. Perhaps the children can offer examples of this in their own lives. Help them to see that when we live this new way, we truly give “new life to the earth” (psalm)

Act of Worship

Sing a simple “Spirit” song, like “Holy Spirit come”.

When rejoining the assembly, process the children in with the seven candles and place before the altar

(NB check this out with the priest before hand)

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 an 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 teach them new things, 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 that was totally life changing for you? How do you use the Spiritual gifts you have been given in service of others? What fruits of the spirit are manifest most in those closest to you? This week work on those gifts 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 you 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

Reader

Acts 2:1-11
The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalms 104

Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader

(if included) Corinthians 12:4-7, 12-13
The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)

Alleluia, alleluia.

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.

Notes

Readings Trinity Sunday

First Reading: Deuteronomy 4:39-40

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

Moses said to the people: "Today there is something you must learn and never forget.

The Lord God rules in heaven above and on earth below. There is no other god. Obey his laws and commands that I am teaching you today. Then all will go well for you and your descendants. You will always live in the land that the Lord your God is giving you forever."

The Word of the Lord

White

We have many different ways of relating to people in our families. We might be a son or a daughter, a niece or a nephew, a brother or a sister. We might be a cousin, a granddaughter or grandson. Sometimes we might even be an aunt or an uncle. God shares life with us through the three persons of the Holy Trinity. We share the love of God, the goodness of Jesus the Son and the friendship of the Holy Spirit.



Responsorial Psalm:

Psalms 33

Response **Happy the people the Lord has chosen to be his own**

The Lord is truthful; he can be trusted.

He loves justice and fairness, and he is kind to everyone everywhere on earth.

The Lord made the heavens and everything in them by his word.

As soon as he spoke the world was created; at his command, the earth was formed.

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

Be kind and bless us! We depend on you.

Gospel:

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 worshiped 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. Baptize 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.

Second Reading:

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and Sisters: Only those 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.

The Word of the Lord

Romans 8:14-17

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, three white candles, an Icon of the Trinity

Images from the Readings

- Baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
- Happy the people the Lord has chosen to be his own
- I will be with you always

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 their responses. Perhaps use some prepared questions, like the following to help develop their ideas.
Do you know what this icon represents? The Holy Trinity. Trinity means something made up of three and today we give thanks for the three persons of God. Who are the three persons who make up the Holy Trinity? The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Can you think of some different ways and times that we use these words? Think about what you do when you come into church and bless yourself with holy water. (The sign of the Cross, the Glory Be, the signing of our head, lips and heart before the reading of the Gospel.)

In the Gospel of Matthew we heard today, Jesus' parting words to his followers "I will be with you always, even until the end of the world."—these are the very last words of the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus was talking to his disciples and to us as well when he said "I will be with you always even until the end of the world." Close your eyes and listen to these words as though Jesus is speaking to you in a special way? What do these words mean for you?

Jesus asked the disciples and us also to do something. He told them and us to go to the people of all nations and make them his disciples. What can you do to spread the teachings of Jesus? There are many different ways we can teach others. What are some of these ways? What opportunities can you find in your daily life to spread the teachings of Jesus?

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Each of these readings gives us an insight into the mystery of God. The First Reading is from a sermon that God put into the mouth of Moses which is used as an introduction to the Ten Commandments in the Book of Deuteronomy. It reflects on the chosen people's experience of God and God's creating Word in the creation story; their experience of God in the history of Israel and the choosing of Israel as a special people set apart; of God the deliverer saving the chosen people from the Egyptians, and finally their experience of the God of the covenant whose precepts

must be obeyed. The second reading recalls the feast of Pentecost celebrated last week and God's gift of life, power and peace to those who know and trust in Jesus Christ. Finally the words that close the gospel of Matthew remind us that as God sent Jesus and Jesus sent his disciples, we the baptised are the new disciples, newly sent to preach, baptise and teach. The children should leave today's liturgy of the Word knowing that God loves them and wants to be close to them.

From the earliest times the Church has pondered the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity which is central to the life and faith of Christians. Different images of the Trinity such as Rublev's Icon, St Patrick's shamrock or the symbol of the triangle are all different ways or attempts to explore the mystery of the Trinity, God who is three in one. The good thing about a mystery is there is always more we can learn about it!

Reflection Leaders:

We have no adequate language for God because God is beyond any single image we may have. We experience God in Jesus Christ who shares with us his experience of God as creator, redeemer and "one of intimate relationship". Our experience of this relationship is the spirit of God living in us.

The last sentence of the Gospel "I will be with you always, even until the end of the world," encapsulates Jesus' role in the lives of us all.

Our God is a God of relationships. The God of our experience is the God we meet in everyday life. We proclaim that we are baptised Christians every time we make the Sign of the Cross and say the words "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Today we celebrate the facets of that relationship, a loving, but a wholly dependent relationship on our part.

In the Gospel Jesus tells us through the disciples to preach, baptise and teach in the name of God. The God who loves us as intimately as a parent; whose own son Jesus shows us a love so great, he died on the cross and rose again to save us from the power of sin; whose spirit fills us with God's own life and warms our hearts with the fire of God's love living within us. Like the disciples we are sent to baptise, preach, spread the Good News of Jesus, to encourage, explain and show unexpected, unasked for, love for others.

The children know instinctively what unconditional love is because they experience it, hopefully, in the shelter of their own families. Such love does not have to be earned but is present like a sheltering roof, or four sturdy walls that offer warmth and protection.

You might talk to the children about baptism. What happens, what words are said, what do they mean? Why water? You could record the words used at baptism as the group remembers them on a large piece of card. After the liturgy this can be carried and attached to a wall somewhere in the church where all can see it - a reminder of who we are and whose we are.

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, Gathered today we remember Jesus' farewell message to us. Help us to remember always who we are, and whose we are.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader:

Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40
The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 33

Happy the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.
(another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader:

(if included) Romans 8:12-17
The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

Matthew 28:16-20

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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 our hearts let us speak to God of our needs:

- For the Church throughout the world, that the Good News will reach every household. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For those suffering hunger, that they will be strong in spirit and not give up hope. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will be blessed with a Government that cares for all our people and acts to help the poor. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will recognise and reach out to the lonely, the left out, those we find it hard to like, the sick, the hungry, the grumpy, the unhappy. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

God our Creator and Saviour listen with favour to the prayers of your children made through Christ our Lord.

All:

Amen.

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

Notes

Readings

The Body and Blood of Christ

White

What would happen if we had no food or anything to drink? Together they keep us alive, and without their life-giving nourishment we would die. Jesus is the bread of life who shares himself with us in a special way during the Mass.



Gospel:

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

It was the first day of the Feast of Thin Bread, and the Passover lambs were being killed. Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to prepare the Passover meal?"

Jesus said to two of the disciples, "Go into the city, where you will meet a man carrying a jar of water. Follow him and when he goes into a house say to the owner, 'Our teacher wants to know if you have a room where he can eat the Passover meal with his disciples.'

The owner will take you upstairs and show you a large room furnished and ready for you to use. Prepare the meal there."

The two disciples went into the city and found everything just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover meal.

During the meal Jesus took some bread in his hands. He blessed the bread and broke it. Then he gave it to his disciples and said, "Take this. It is my body."

Jesus picked up a cup of wine and gave thanks to God. He then gave it to his disciples and said, "Drink it!" So they all drank some.

Then he said, "This is my blood, which is poured out for many people, and with it God makes his agreement. From now on I will not drink any wine until I drink new wine in God's kingdom."

Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

The Gospel of the Lord

First Reading:

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF EXODUS

Moses told the people all of the Lord's commands and laws. The people answered, "We will do everything the Lord has commanded!" Then Moses wrote down all that the Lord had said.

The next morning Moses got up early and built an altar at the foot of the mountain. He took a large stone for each of the twelve tribes of Israel and placed the stones there.

Then he sent some young men to burn offerings and sacrifice bulls as special offerings to the Lord. Moses put half of the blood from the animals into some bowls and sprinkled the other half on the altar.

Moses read aloud from the book of the Lord's promises and the people shouted, "We will obey the Lord! We will do everything he has commanded."

Then Moses took the blood that was in the bowls. He sprinkled it on the people and told them, "This blood shows that the Lord will keep all of his promises to you."

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 116

Response **I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.**

What must I give you, Lord, for being so good to me?

I will pour out an offering of wine to you,

and I will pray in your name because you have saved me.

I will offer you a sacrifice to show how grateful I am, and I will pray.

I will keep my promise to you when your people gather at your temple in Jerusalem.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle, pita bread or roll and a glass of grape juice

Images from the Readings

- The Lord will keep his promises to you
- Passover meal
- Prepare the meal
- It is my Body
- This is my blood

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 by building on to their responses, perhaps using some prepared questions like the following, to stimulate ideas. Are there times in our lives when we celebrate an event with a special meal? When? What do you eat on these special occasions? Discuss with the children some of the different times that families gather to share a special meal: Christmas, Easter, birthdays, weddings, and so forth. Help them see that certain foods have become symbols of what we are celebrating. When we see and eat certain food, it makes the event real and even brings back memories of past celebrations. For example, many families have roast lamb for dinner every Christmas. It has become symbolic for the celebration of this special event. Sharing in this special dinner brings members of the family closer together.

Show the children the gifts of bread and wine on the prayer focus. What special event was Jesus celebrating with his disciples? What food did they use? Help them make the connection between Jesus' words to his disciples and the words we use at Mass – "This is my Body; this is my blood; do this in memory of me" When we come together for Mass, we still remember what Jesus said and did. We too share that bread and wine which is the very life of Jesus and it brings us all closer together. Jesus knew that just as our bodies need nourishment from the food we eat at home, so do our souls. The bread and wine of Holy Communion is food for our souls and sharing in this special meal helps us to remember that people have been doing what Jesus asked them to do to remember him, for a very long time. Week by week we can feed on this living bread and wine so we may grow in holiness and bring God's life to all we meet.

Act of Worship

Share the singing of a communion song such as "Jesus You are Bread for Us" by Christopher Walker.

Background to the Readings for Leaders:

The focus of the readings is on the covenant sealed in blood. The importance of blood as the life-force and the image of life itself is stressed in each reading and gives meaning to the sharing of the cup as a symbol of renewing the life-giving covenant. The first reading describes Moses' sealing of the first covenant, while in the Gospel Jesus speaks of the new covenant sealed in his blood. The first covenant was an expression of the personal and sacred commitment between God and the people of Israel. To the Hebrew mind, blood was the source and symbol of life. The blood, representing God, is poured on the altar and on the people. In the Gospel Jesus prepares to eat a last meal with his friends he knows that the final moments are upon him. Careful preparations are made for the meal; it must be celebrated in peace, to savour the gift that will be offered. The gift is a surprise. Jesus gives himself. The friendship Jesus has had with his followers is about to come to an end. That fellowship will be renewed in full only in the kingdom of God. Now it is our turn. Every time we gather to celebrate Eucharist, using the same symbols of bread and wine through which Jesus invites us to share his body and blood, we encounter the living Lord, ever present to us. To share in his life, to be one with him, is to live forever.

A Reflection on the Readings for Leaders:

Mark's Gospel describes the Last Supper ritual through which Jesus communicated this extraordinary gift to the disciples. It is the gift of divine life that enters us each time we receive the body and blood of the Eucharist. Christ himself becomes our life, satisfying our hunger and thirst. He chose to make this concept a reality in bread and wine, symbols in which we encounter the living Lord.

Jesus celebrated a special meal with his disciples the night before he died. They shared bread and wine. Jesus told them that from now on, whenever his disciples share that bread and wine and remember him, he is present with them in a special way.

When we come together for Mass, we remember what Jesus said and did. We too share that bread and wine which is the very life of Jesus, and it brings us all closer together. We eat the bread and drink from the cup and say that we believe in Jesus, and yes we become the very body and blood of Christ. And we are sent to be bread – to be life - for others.

The Eucharist is not something we come to watch it is rather something we come to do. In the action of the Mass we gather as a consecrated people, we hold holy the memory of Jesus, we share the bread that is broken, we accept the cup that is held out to us then we go out to live what we have received. Reflect this week on the different ways you are "bread" for others and how others are "bread" for you.

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, from the beginning of time you have been our God and we have been your people. With your help we can remain true to the Gospel. Amen.

FIRST READING

Exodus 24:3-8

Reader:

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalms 115

I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.
(Sing this or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

(if included) Hebrews 9: 11-15

Reader:

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 our hearts we call upon our loving God for our needs:

- For the Church in the world, the body of Christ, that each of its members will be cherished. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For peace where there is trouble in the world. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That we the children of Aotearoa New Zealand will lead our people to live in peace with each other. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For the gift of understanding that we will, with cheerful hearts love others as ourselves. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

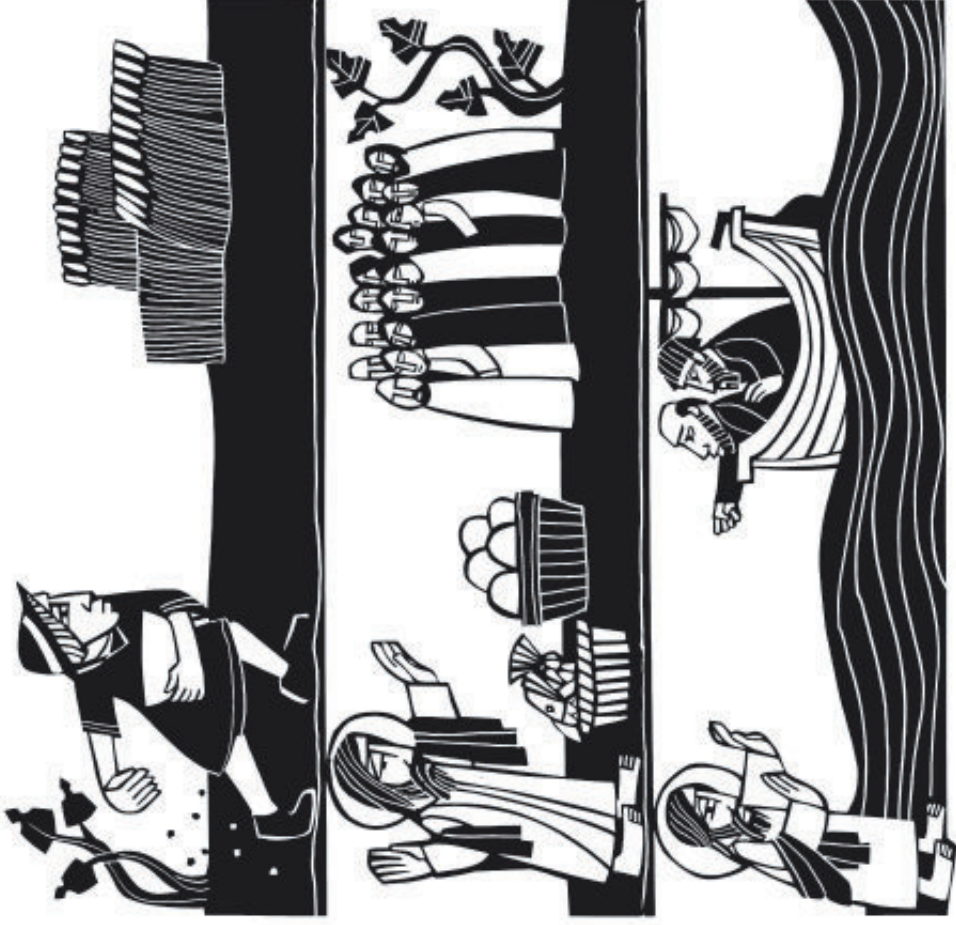
Leader:

God our Hope and Peace gather us and those for whom we pray to you. We make our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

All:

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

Notes



ORDINARY TIME

Readings

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

*"Here I am Lord, your servant is listening."
With these words we echo the words of
the boy Samuel each day of our lives. We
are assured of the same answer as the
Apostles when we ask "Where do you live
Lord?" the reply is always the same "Come
and see."*



First Reading A READING FROM THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

Samuel was sleeping in the temple when the Lord called out to him.

"Here I am," Samuel answered. He ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, sir. What can I do for you?"

Eli replied, "I didn't call you. Go back to bed." So Samuel went back.

Once more the Lord called Samuel's name. Samuel got up. He went to Eli and said, "Here I am. What can I do for you?"

But Eli told him, "Son, I didn't call you. Now go back to sleep."

Samuel did not realize that the Lord was speaking, because this was the first time the Lord had spoken to him. When the Lord spoke a third time that night, Samuel again went to Eli and said, "Here I am. What can I do for you?"

Eli now knew that it was the Lord who was speaking to Samuel. So Eli told him, "Go back to bed. If someone speaks to you again, answer, 'Lord, I am your servant. Speak, and I will listen.'"

Once again Samuel went back and lay down.

The Lord came and stood beside Samuel. Then he called out as he had done before, "Samuel! Samuel!"

The boy replied, "Lord, I am your servant. Speak, and I will listen."

As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and made everything he said come true.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel

John 1:35-42

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

On one occasion John was with two of his followers. When he saw Jesus walking by, he said, "Here is the Lamb of God!" John's two followers heard him, and they went with Jesus.

When Jesus turned and saw them, he asked, "What do you want?"

They answered, "Rabbi, where do you live?" The Hebrew word "Rabbi" means "Teacher."

Jesus replied, "Come and see!"

It was already about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with him and saw where he lived. So they stayed on for the rest of the day.

One of the two men who had heard John and had gone with Jesus was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter.

The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother and tell him, "We have found the Messiah!" The Hebrew word "Messiah" means the same as the Greek word "Christ."

Andrew brought his brother to Jesus. And when Jesus saw him, he said, "Simon son of John, you will be called Cephas." This name can be translated as "Peter."

The Gospel 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 (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle,

Images from the Readings

- “Here I am”
- “I will listen”
- Lamb of God
- “Come and See”

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: “What did you hear?” While we listen each child is given the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. You might begin general discussion by building on the responses offered by the children. One way of expanding on their responses is to use questions which can be prepared beforehand. Some ideas for questions and a reflection follow.

John the Baptist described Jesus as the “Lamb of God.” Why did John compare Jesus to a lamb? (To encourage discussion, try to provide a picture of a lamb for the children to look at.)

Lambs are meek and gentle, just as Jesus was. Often they were offered by people as a sacrifice to God to show their love for him. Jesus was sent by his heavenly father to proclaim the Good News and to save us. Like a lamb, he was prepared to be sacrificed, to suffer and to die out of love for us, so that we could share everlasting life in heaven.

When John pointed Jesus out, what did the two men do? John had often told his followers about the one who was to come after him: the Messiah promised by God. John urged his followers to go with Jesus and to become his disciples, so they followed him.

What did Jesus do when he saw the two men following him? He invited them to join him and took them to his home. They were completely amazed by this meeting, and marvelled at everything Jesus said.

One of these men became an apostle of Jesus. Do you know his name? His name was Andrew, and he was the brother of Simon Peter. After this first meeting with Jesus he ran to tell his brother Simon Peter all about Jesus because he believed that Jesus really was the saviour of the world.

Do we respond to God’s call by saying “Speak Lord your servant is listening?”

Act of Worship

Sing or pray as an ‘echo prayer’ *Speak From Your Heart, Monica Brown (As One Voice Vol. 2, 108)*

Refrain:

You can speak from your heart to me, O Jesus,
You can say anything you’d like to say to me,
And I will speak from my heart to you, O Jesus,
And say to you whatever I’d like to say.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Eli had hoped his own sons would succeed him at the temple, but God had other plans, through Samuel, prophet and kingmaker the twelve tribes of Israel will become a nation. John the Baptist’s mission was to prepare the people for the coming of Jesus and then direct them to him and away from himself. Jesus is identified by John as “The lamb of God” that is, one whose life is to be a sacrificial offering—the Messiah. John’s testimony sets in motion the attachment of the first disciples to Jesus. In the final verse Jesus calls Peter by a new name indicating that he is taking on of a whole new way of life, that he has made a life-changing choice. To be a disciple of the Christ is to be completely transformed and to embark on a new direction in life.

Reflection for Leaders

In today’s First Reading and Gospel we have a parallel between the calling of the two disciples and the hearing of Samuel.

In the Gospel the invitation “come and see” is made to us too—we follow, listen and remain with Jesus because we believe he is what we need. The call to be a follower of Jesus is just the beginning though. Growing within the body of Christ, the community is a life long process. Year by year our understanding of what and who we are is fed by listening to the scriptures, participating in the liturgy and prayer to our creator as a true Christian, with and through Christ. In the First Testament it was God who called people to share life, in the New Testament it is Jesus who calls to new life.

Leaders might like to retell for the children the story of Hannah, Eli and Samuel

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, Help us to be open to you in our lives and to seek you out for we know that you love us. Amen.

FIRST READING

1 Samuel 3:1-10,19

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

- Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalms 39

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)
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

- 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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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: Full of the hope of the Gospel let us bring our needs before God.

- For the Church where her people learn to give and receive forgiveness.
Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For an end to war and violence in the world. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- That the people of Aotearoa New Zealand will always seek fairness and justice. Let us pray to Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For the grace to be gentle with our family, friends and all people. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

O God you care for your people, shower your blessings on us and on 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.

Notes

Readings

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green



When Simon and Andrew responded to Jesus call to follow him, they were two fishermen casting their nets into the sea. What a change that call and their response to it made in their lives. We are called too to follow the new way of Jesus and our response has changed our lives whether we acknowledge the fact or not.

First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JONAH

The Lord spoke to Jonah and said, "Jonah, go to that great city of Nineveh and speak to them for me."

Jonah obeyed the Lord and went to Nineveh. The city was so large that it took three days just to walk through it. After walking for a day, Jonah told the people, "Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed."

They believed God's message and they set a time when they would all go without eating. Then everyone in the city, no matter who they were, also dressed in sackcloth.

When God saw that the people had stopped doing evil things, he had pity on them and did not destroy them, as he had said.

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Response:

Psalm 25

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 stay on your path

Gospel

Mark 1:14-20

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee and told the good news that comes from God. He said, "The time has come! God's kingdom will soon be here. Turn back to God and believe the good news!"

As Jesus was walking along the shores of Lake Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were fishermen and were casting their nets 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 and soon saw James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were in a boat, mending their nets. At once Jesus asked them to come with him. They left their father in the boat with the hired workers and went with him.

The Gospel of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle, picture of someone walking along a path or netting resembling a fishing net

Images from the Readings

- Repent and believe
- Follow me
- Went after him
- Called and sent

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: “What did you hear?” While we listen each child is given the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. You might begin general discussion by building on to the responses offered by the children. One way of expanding on their responses is to use questions which can be prepared beforehand. Some ideas for questions and a reflection follow.

Who were the brothers who left their boats and nets to follow Jesus? They were Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John. Jesus asked them to follow him and become fishers of people. These men would help lead people back to God and teach others of God’s great love for them.

Many people followed Jesus and became his disciples, but Jesus chose a small number of them to carry on his work. How many did he choose, and can you remember some of their names?

Jesus chose twelve apostles. The name “apostle” was given to a follower of Jesus who had been specially chosen. They were all close friends of Jesus who were chosen to preach and perform miracles in his name.

The names of the twelve apostles were: Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, (another) James, Thaddaeus, Simon, and Judas. Jesus calls us to follow him, too. When we are baptized into the Christian family we are called to be followers of Christ. But Jesus also calls us to follow him every day. How?

To follow Jesus, we do not usually have to leave home like the first disciples did! By loving God and our neighbour we can follow Jesus every day by living as Jesus taught us to.

Act of Worship

The Greek words, *Kyrie Eleison* mean, “the merciful one is here”. Teach the children the meaning of these words then use this refrain as part of a simple litany of repentance and preparation before listening to the readings of the day

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Read the Book of Jonah from the Old Testament for some background to today’s First Reading, some of the children will have heard the story of Jonah and the whale. But the interesting part is the contest between Jonah’s own sense of justice and the will of God. There are a few moments of suspense before it becomes clear that Jonah will obey. Jonah realises the futility of fighting with the will of God after his experience with the storm and the great fish. There may also be a lingering hope that the Ninevites will reject his message and thus receive what he considers is their just reward from the wrath of a patient God. Jonah does not have a change of heart, he merely complies to the wishes of the Lord because he has found escape impossible.

The prompt action of the Ninevites presents a model for true repentance in three stages: first they acknowledge their guilt and show this by outward actions (proclaim a fast and put on sackcloth) secondly they have an internal change of attitude (turn away from evil and violence) lastly they acknowledge God’s freedom to accept or reject their repentance.

In the Gospel the first words foreshadow Jesus’ own fate at the hands of the people. “After John had been handed over....” Jesus makes a claim upon the disciples and gives a new direction to their lives. Mark the writer gives the impression that Peter and Andrew answered Jesus’ call by leaving behind their livelihood, whereas James and John responded by severing family ties, his primary purpose seems to be to show that discipleship entails renunciation of possessions and family ties. It was customary for Jewish students to approach a distinguished teacher and attach themselves to him here the teacher makes the first move. The disciples left behind a thriving and secure business to follow Jesus, emphasising the costliness of discipleship with its demands to leave behind family and financial security.

Reflection for Leaders

You know that God has an important message to send and chooses you to do it, you may never know how God uses you to relay that message.

The disciples must have been afraid to change their way of life, afraid of the unknown, of the risks they were taking, fear of the unknown can be a stumbling block to change in our lives. Jonah too experiences fear to respond to the will of God for him and tries to run away. In Jonah’s story we are given an illustration of how we are to die to ourselves and be born into the world of God’s will. (Symbolised in the story by the time Jonah spent inside the belly of the fish.)

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:

Loving God, You call us as you called Jonah to do your work in the world. Help us to say yes when we are called to do good. Amen.

FIRST READING

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

- Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 24

Teach me your ways, O Lord.

(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

(not included this week)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

- Glory to you, Lord.

Mark 1:14-20

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 happy hearts let us call upon God for our needs.

- For a deep thirst for justice in the church throughout the world. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord, hear our prayer.
- For a hunger for peace every where. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord, hear our prayer.
- For the spirit of goodwill to our neighbours. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.
- For the grace to accept others as they are. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader:

God protector and Saviour, hear the prayers 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.

Notes

Readings

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading A READING FROM THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

The Lord said to Moses: I will choose one of their own people to be a prophet like you. I will give my message to that prophet, who will tell the people exactly what I have said. That prophet will speak in my name, and anyone who doesn't obey the message will answer to me.

The Word of the Lord

Green

When Jesus cured the man with the evil spirit he was showing us that God does not want us to live in fear or be afraid. By listening carefully to God's word and trying to live more like Jesus did, God can work very powerfully in our lives so we can help others who are troubled or frightened.



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.

Gospel

Mark 1:21-28

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus and his disciples went to the town of Capernaum. Then on the next Sabbath he went into the Jewish meeting place and started teaching. Everyone was amazed at his teaching. He taught with authority, and not like the teachers of the Law of Moses.

Suddenly a man with an evil spirit in him entered the meeting place and yelled, "Jesus of Nazareth, what do you want with us? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are! You are God's Holy One."

Jesus told the evil spirit, "Be quiet and come out of that man!" The spirit shook him. Then it gave a loud shout and left.

Everyone was completely surprised and kept saying to each other, "What is this? It must be some kind of powerful teaching! Even the evil spirits obey him." News about Jesus quickly spread all over that part of Galilee.

The Gospel of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle,

Images from the Readings

- With authority
- Powerful teaching
- We are safe
- Speak in my name

Discussion Points

Jesus was recognised by his actions, we too have a mission to be recognised as his followers by our actions. When we act out of faith in God wonderful things happen. Until we begin to live and act with faith we are one among the many of those who have been called and chosen but who have not yet begun to realise fully what it means to be followers of Christ.

Why do you think the people were amazed and astonished at the way Jesus taught? What did the man with an unclean spirit call Jesus? What did the people in the temple say about Jesus?

Which words or phrases from the Gospel stick in your mind? (Read the Gospel through again slowly to help the children remember it.)

Act of Worship

The children could mime out or make a short play of the Gospel scene, with the character of Jesus and the crowd in the temple who begin to listen and slowly crowd around to hear the powerful message.

Focus the children on the play by asking questions beforehand. How would the people have felt hearing Jesus, a stranger, speaking in the temple with power and authority that they had never heard before? When he cast out the evil spirit from the man how would they have felt?

You might discuss actions of faith with the children. Ask them to give you some occasions from their own lives when they or someone they know of has acted out of faith. These could be listed on a chart prepared beforehand headed "Acts of Faith". To hang such a poster in the church for every one to read might be an inspiration to some people.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The Book of Deuteronomy has the rules and regulations about every aspect of Jewish life including the role and purpose of priests and prophets. God promised that he would not desert his people - that there would always be a prophet to stand between them and God. Moses was the model for the prophets. - Jesus would be a fulfilment of the law and the prophets. In the ancient Jewish tradition, the prophet, the authoritative interpreter of God's word, was a key ministry.

In today's readings there is a strong link between the description of a true prophet as the mouthpiece of God and a scene where Jesus is described as one who teaches the people "with authority". - God is the source of this authority.

Reflection for Leaders

In an age where self fulfilment, self motivation, self assertiveness, self development are all catch-cries, as Christians, we are called upon to base our lives on a far greater authority than simply our own self-made wisdom and leadership. It is from God and God alone that our lives take their direction. Today's first reading describes this authority as the word and laws of God passed down through the prophets. In the Gospel it is seen as the authority given Jesus over sin and evil.

The Gospel is really an extraordinary story and I'm sure the children can be helped to realise this. As an illustration of the authority and power of Jesus this simple scene is very effective. By relating the extraordinary right alongside the ordinary Mark reveals to us the enormous impression that Jesus made on the everyday lives of the people. We have Jesus teaching in the temple, not extraordinary, there were often teachers speaking in the temple on the Sabbath, there would have been lots of people around listening and fulfilling their Sabbath duties according to the law. Jesus though taught with astonishing conviction catching every ones attention, but that wasn't too extraordinary, then against this background of the ordinary routine Sabbath day temple activities someone possessed by "an evil spirit" began shouting at Jesus accusing him and calling him "God's Holy One" and we know the rest of the story and how Jesus' fame began to spread around the surrounding countryside. What a shock to the lives of the complacent, the ordinary: here was someone said to be from God who spoke with amazing authority and had power over evil spirits, - this news travelled like wild fire throughout the countryside. Isn't it the same news that we have, through our baptism, been commissioned to spread? How are we going about it? Is the news not still as vital and life changing now as it was then? Has it become stale and worn out? Doesn't it still rate as news-worthy in our world of mega happenings, multiple killings, millions of dollars lost to fire, robbery, flood, fraud, foolhardiness. Doesn't it add up to news these days when the agencies that process what news we hear compete with each other for the most gruesome killing, the most depraved act of bestiality, news of the worst possible scenario? Maybe we need to rethink our Good News and realize how relevant it in fact is for a world in which individuals grasp at any shred of hope and are in search for some conviction to base their lives upon.

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: Faithful God, You have blessed us with the gift of faith in you and your works. Help us to act bravely with faith in our lives, to live lives that show we have faith in your love. Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader: Deuteronomy 18:15-20
 The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 95
 If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

(not included this week)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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:

Having listened to the Word of God, let us call on God with happy hearts for our needs.

- For the Church our mother, that the sick and dying will receive her peace.
 Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For a stop to the suffering of oppressed people everywhere.
 Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For good and caring parents for all children. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will always be gentle with others. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

God our creator and our hope, Lord of the universe, look with kindness upon those for whom we pray and grant our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord.
 Amen.

All:

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

Notes

Readings

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green



Mark reveals for us a Christ who prays and is close to God, a compassionate Christ who works day and night at the work that has been assigned him. We contrast Jesus' attitude to that of Job who speaks of his days in complaining tones as being "swifter than a weavers shuttle", Jesus personifies the busyness that Job speaks of. We might ask if our lives are founded on prayer and as full of the Lord's work as those of he whom we would follow.

Gospel

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

As soon as Jesus left the meeting place with James and John, they went home with Andrew and Simon. When they got there, Jesus was told that Simon's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a fever. Jesus went to her. He took hold of her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she served them a meal.

That evening, after sunset, all who were sick or had demons in them were brought to Jesus. In fact, the whole town gathered around the door of the house.

Jesus healed all kinds of terrible diseases and forced out a lot of demons. But the demons knew who he was, and he did not let them speak.

Very early the next morning Jesus got up and went to a place where he could be alone and pray. Simon and the others started looking for him.

And when they found him, they said, "Everyone is looking for you!"

Jesus replied, "We must go to the nearby towns, so that I can tell the good news to those people. This is why I have come."

Then Jesus went to the Jewish meeting places everywhere in Galilee, where he preached and forced out demons.

The Gospel of the Lord

First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF JOB

Job responded to his friend and said: "Life on earth is slavery! We spend our days like labourers. I am only a slave in search of shade, a labourer waiting for his wages.

Each month of my life is meaningless, and all of my nights are miserable. While lying in my bed I ask, "How long before time to get up?" The night drags slowly on, as I toss and turn until the sun rises.

"My days fly by more swiftly than the needle of a weaver, and they end without hope. Remember that my life is merely a breath, and I will never be happy again."

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Response:

Psalm 146

Praise the Lord who heals the broken-hearted.

Shout praises to the Lord! Our God is kind,

And it is right and good to sing praises to him.

He decided how many stars there would be in the sky

And gave each one a name.

Our Lord is great and powerful He understands everything.

Celebrate and sing! Play your harps for the Lord our God.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brothers and sisters: I don't have any reason to brag about preaching the good news. Preaching is something that God told me to do, and if I don't do it, I am doomed. If I preach because I want to, I will be paid. But even if I don't want to, it is still something that God has sent me to do. What pay am I given? It is the chance to preach the good news free of charge and not to use the privileges that are mine because I am a preacher.

The Word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle,

Images from the Readings

- Helped her up
- Alone to pray
- God has sent me
- Heals the broken hearted

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? (While everyone listens each child is given the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God.) When each has had an opportunity to speak you might begin general discussion by building on to their responses. (One way of expanding on the responses of the children is to use questions which can be prepared beforehand. Some ideas for questions and a reflection follow.) What part do you remember most from the readings? What actions did Jesus perform in the Gospel? and when he left the village where he had been, where did he go? and what did he do?

Act of Worship

Create a special place to pray the Lord's Prayer today, somewhere quiet and separate from the area used for the liturgy- maybe outside. When we pray the Lord's Prayer have the children stand and raise their hands in supplication to God, try to give the prayer special meaning.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The story of Job is interesting and well worth reading as background to today's readings. Job was successful, well off with a nice home and family, and religious. God is proud of him but Satan says he might not be so religious if he was less fortunate. So God lets Satan test Job and find out. Poor Job loses everything including his health. His friends are not much help to him, they suggest he must have done something wrong to deserve such bad luck. When finally Job turns to God for answers he begins to understand that he cannot expect to fathom the ways of God and eventually his former lifestyle is restored. In today's reading we have a picture of a good man suffering undeservedly. Life is without joy and hope because Job is full of self pity. The Gospel of last week and today could be called, "A Day in the Life of Jesus". They follow on from each other in the Gospel of Mark. The day begins for Jesus with teaching and confronting evil at the synagogue. Then going to Simon and Andrew's house and finding Simon's mother-in-law lying sick with fever, he heals her, not only to cure her fever but so that she might serve them. - Mark thus emphasises that Jesus heals in order that we might be better able to do his work. When the Sabbath is officially over at sundown the townspeople bring the sick and possessed for Jesus to heal, others come too, to witness the miracles. In the early hours of the next mourning, some hours before daybreak, Jesus rises and goes to a lonely place to pray.

Reflection for Leaders

Mark seems to be emphasising the purpose of Jesus' mission - to teach and to heal so that we might be free to serve God. We too need to look to healing people both by our physical support and by helping free their spirits from any material and psychological bondage. Jesus seems to shy away from the direction his mission is beginning to take, or the consequences of his mission, - the crowds wanting miracles and coming to witness miracles, almost as if he is unprepared for this sensationalism and emotion, being prepared for teaching and fulfilling the Word and perhaps knowing that all the clamour attached to his healing miracles was not where he wanted the focus to be. This becomes even more clear in next weeks reading from Mark where after curing a man with leprosy Jesus tells him to tell nobody of his cure. Or perhaps this is because he doesn't want his disciples to recognise him as the Messiah who is to die and rise again, just yet.

We are reminded that the cure of a person, the setting free from sicknesses of the body and mind, is a freeing to serve others and God in a more complete way.

We are reminded in the Book of Job that God's ways are not our ways. Though the hardship that afflicted Job might be seen by us to be unjust, the actions of God cannot be viewed with the same human outlook.

We can emphasise with the children today the value of daily prayer in our lives. That our lives need to be connected each day to God's love and being connected can then do the work of following in the footsteps of our Saviour.

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: God our Creator, You show us how to live. Help us to follow the life and teachings of Jesus, your Son, so that our lives will be pleasing to you and helpful to others. Amen.

FIRST READING

Job 7:1-4, 6-7

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 146

Praise the Lord who heals the broken-hearted.
 (or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

(if included) 1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 1:29-39

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
 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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 strong faith and hope let us pray to God for our needs.

▪ For the Church, the community of believers. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord hear our prayer.

▪ For an end to violence in the world. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord hear our prayer.

▪ That all the different people of our land will be blessed with love for each other. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord hear our prayer.

▪ That we will learn to always respect others and the world we live in. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord hear our prayer.

Leader: God of light and peace, give your abundant blessings to us and to 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.

Notes

Readings

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brothers and sisters:

When you eat or drink or do anything else, always do it to honour God. Don't cause problems for Jews or Greeks or anyone else who belongs to God's church. I always try to please others instead of myself, in the hope that many of them will be saved. You must follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

The Word of the Lord

Green

The way Jesus treated people with kindness and compassion was as important as his miracles. Invite the children to share their own experiences of being unwanted or left out and who made them feel better. Remind the children that this is the way that Jesus wants us to live. When and how can we do this?



Responsorial Psalm
Response:

Psalms 31

**I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble,
and you fill me with the joy of salvation.**

Our God, you bless everyone whose sins you forgive and wipe away.

So I confessed my sins and told them all to you.

I turn to you Lord, in time of trouble.

And so your good people should celebrate and shout.

Gospel

Mark 1:40-45

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

A man with leprosy came to Jesus and kneeled down. He begged, "You have the power to make me well, if only you wanted to."

Jesus felt sorry for the man. So he put his arm on him and said, "I want to! Now you are well." At once the man's leprosy disappeared, and he was well.

After Jesus strictly warned the man, he sent him on his way. He said, "Don't tell anyone about this. Just go and show yourself to the temple as Moses commanded, and everyone will know that you have been healed."

The man talked about it so much and told so many people, that Jesus could no longer go openly into a town. He had to stay away from the towns, but people still came to him from everywhere.

The Gospel of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle,

Images from the Readings

- Now you are well
- Take a gift
- Honour God
- Follow the example of Christ

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? (While everyone listens each child is given the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God.) When each has had an opportunity to speak you might begin general discussion by building on to their responses. (One way of expanding on the responses of the children is to use questions which can be prepared beforehand. Some ideas for questions and a reflection follow.)

Jesus breaks all the rules when speaking with the man with leprosy. Touching and speaking to those who were declared by the old law to be unclean was forbidden. Jesus says by his actions that the sick and outcasts are to be part of his ministry, part of God's kingdom on earth. This is a strong message for us. No one is to be excluded from our mission in the world.

What did Moses say people with leprosy had to do? When the man with leprosy asked Jesus to cure him what did Jesus say? What did Jesus then ask the man to do? Why, do you think Jesus asked the man to say nothing to anybody about his cure except to the priest?

Act of Worship

(use material from end of reflection for leaders)

Pray by name for those who need healing or special care to be included in our lives and activities.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

In the First Reading the laws on people with diseases of the skin are spelled out by Moses for the people of Israel. The determination of the diseases active and inactive state belonged to the priest who acted not as physician but as a judge and interpreter of the law, whose permission was required before purification rites allowing

re-entry into the community were allowed to begin. During the time of uncleanness the diseased person had to remain outside the city, giving notice of his condition to everyone in the way described in today's reading. Leprosy as used in the readings was a general term for any repulsive scaly skin disease. Concern was for the lack of bodily integrity necessary under the law for the worship of Yahweh and this was the reason for the protective legislation of religious and social ostracism. By touching the leper and thus breaking the law, Jesus puts himself in the same situation as the leper, making himself in turn unclean, banning himself from worship and contact with the community until a priest declares him cleansed, he has made himself an outcast by choice. Sickness of any sort and skin disease in particular was considered by the Jews as a punishment from God for sin committed.

Reflection for Leaders

How would it be, if we when spiritually sick or after having sinned, should be made to shout "Unclean, unclean!" to ward people off and away from us for fear that they too might be infected by our down fall? Instead we are asked to befriend outcasts and those afflicted and to offer forgiveness.

Jesus in today's reading reaches out and touches the unclean leper and thus cures him of his affliction. Picture the scene in your mind the diseased and ostracised leper coming to Jesus and falling on his knees with the words "If you want to, you can make me clean." As sinners, we, as we journey once more through Lent find here encouragement to throw ourselves on the mercy of a compassionate God.

Reflect today on the people in our society who are on the outside, the poor the weak, the drunkard, the prostitute, the compulsive gambler, the racial minority, the indigenous people, the unemployed, the unskilled, the aids victim, the insane, anyone who is different from the norm, and formulate your response to them in the light of today's Gospel.

You might explain to the children a little about the background to the way the Jews treated people with leprosy (There is background in the Bible in the Book of Leviticus, chapters 13-14) Discuss how we treat people with similar infectious skin diseases these days. Ask the question: By associating with outcasts and people like lepers what message was Jesus giving his disciples and the Jewish people? Who belongs to the kingdom of heaven, who are the chosen people of God? The answer has to be —everyone belongs. Make a list with the children of the people who are on the outside of our society. A good way to begin is to assimilate these "outsiders" into our prayer. To pray for them by name at the end of our Liturgy of the Word and at the Prayers of the Faithful. We could suggest a project to the children. That this week they are to make a special effort to reach out to someone who is on the outside of their social circle at school.

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: God our creator, You are all knowing. We do not understand how some people are sick and others are not, some have troubles and some do not, help us to reach out to those who are outside our group of friends, and to bring in those who are not wanted. Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader: 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1
The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble,
and you fill me with the joy of salvation.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

□ 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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 the Word of God in the scriptures, let us now call upon God for our needs:

▪ For the Church in the world. Let us pray to the Lord.

□ Lord hear our prayer.

▪ For trustworthy and caring leaders for all the people of the world. Let us pray to the Lord.

□ Lord hear our prayer.

▪ For people who will put others before themselves to govern our country. Let us pray to the Lord.

□ Lord hear our prayer.

▪ That we will be strong enough to stand alone when everyone deserts us. Let us pray to the Lord.

□ Lord hear our prayer.

Leader: God of love and compassion hear the prayers 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.

Notes

Readings

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

Jesus is always there for us and reaches out to help us by using people around us. When others need our help we can take a turn at helping them in God's name too. We all need each other and this is what belonging in our Church is all about.



Gospel

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus went to Capernaum, and a few days later people heard that he was at home. Then so many of them came to the house that there was not even standing room left in front of the door.

Jesus was still teaching when four people came up, carrying a crippled man on a mat. But because of the crowd, they could not get him to Jesus. So they made a hole in the roof above him and let the man down in front of everyone.

When Jesus saw how much faith they had, he said to the crippled man, "My friend, your sins are forgiven."

Some of the teachers of the Law of Moses were sitting there. They started wondering, "Why would he say such a thing? He must think he is God! Only God can forgive sins."

Right away Jesus knew what they were thinking, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking such things? Is it easier for me to tell this crippled man that his sins are forgiven or to tell him to get up and pick up his mat and go on home? I will show you that the Son of Man has the right to forgive sins here on earth." So Jesus said to the man, "Get up! Pick up your mat and go on home."

The man got right up. He picked up his mat and went out while everyone watched in amazement. They praised God and said, "We have never seen anything like this!"

The Gospel of the Lord

First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

I, the Lord, said to Israel:

"You have not become tired from worshipping me. You have not honoured me by sacrificing sheep or other animals. And I have not burdened you with demands for sacrifices and sweet-smelling incense. You have not bought delicious spices for me or given me the best part of your sacrificed animals. But you have burdened me down with your terrible sins. Yet I wipe away your sins because of who I am. And so, I will forget about your sins."

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Response:

Psalm 40

Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.

You, Lord God, bless everyone who cares for the poor, and you rescue those people in times of trouble. You protect them and keep them alive. You make them happy here in this land.

You always heal them and restore their strength when they are sick. You, the Lord God of Israel, will be praised forever! Amen and amen.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle,

Images from the Readings

- No room left
- Hole in the roof
- Get up
- I will forget your sins
- Amen

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? (While everyone listens each child is given the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God.) When each has had an opportunity to speak you might begin general discussion by building on to their responses. (One way of expanding on the responses of the children is to use questions which can be prepared beforehand. Some ideas for questions and a reflection follow.)

The promise contained in the song of Isaiah in the First Reading today is good news indeed for us all. The words of reassurance that God will not remember our sins and transgressions while meant for the whole people of Israel, can be taken by us on a personal level as well. Jesus reinforces this message when saying to the paralysed man before he says or does anything else, "Your sins are forgiven you." What else do we need to hear, surely that is enough, to know that our sins are forgiven, that the slate has been wiped clean, that we can start afresh when ever we are serious enough to make the effort.

Act of Worship

Think of all the times we say 'Amen'. The word Amen means we are present, we are open, we are of one mind, we understand, So be it. Today let us take a small pause before each time we say "Amen" and think carefully about what we are saying 'Amen' to.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Jesus is powerful in both word and deed: his power to forgive sins is confirmed by his power to heal the paralysed man. The story enabled early Christians to point to this passage as proof for their claims about forgiveness of sins through Jesus. Mark brings together the concepts of "sin" and "illness" by Jesus first of all forgiving the paralytic's sins. This action brings to the forefront of the scene before us a conflict that is uppermost in the minds of the people of the day, the connection in their minds

between sickness, deformity or physical handicap of any sort and punishment from God for sin. Thus alleviating the need of the practising Jews to have anything to do with the afflicted.

The identity of Jesus is another question being addressed by today's readings. Jesus the Messiah has been identified by the one possessed in the synagogue at Capernaum (Mk 1:21-28) as "the Holy One of God" but Jesus rebukes him and tells him to tell nobody of what has happened to him. But word of Jesus actions and sayings spreads.

The crowd would have known that according to several Old Testament writings the one who forgives sin is God. And it is their reaction to what they are seeing, how they are going to receive this news that Mark is interested in relating to us. They were all amazed at this person who can forgive sins and heal the paralysis of the cripple. We are amazed. Amazement is a valid and good response to such events that seem to go against natural and physical laws.

Reflection for Leaders

"When Jesus saw their faith...." The faith of these few people, the four who carried the cripple and the cripple himself is the medium that carries the story, that and Jesus' battle with the orthodox beliefs of the scribes and Jewish leaders.

The story is so simple that it will appeal to the minds of the children. The simple solution to the problem of being unable to get the crippled man any where near Jesus surrounded in the house as he was with people eager to hear what he is saying. The scene is easily pictured. It is an ideal story to replay out on a flannel board with felt figures cut out to represent the main characters. The whole idea of climbing to the roof, removing some roofing material above the area where Jesus is and then lowering down the cripple on a stretcher so that he lands right beside Jesus is so dramatic a solution to a problem that it has instant appeal. When discussing it with the children, you might ask them to imagine the response of Jesus' listeners to the hole being made in the roof above their heads. Ask how they would react. Some will be wondering how Jesus is going to handle the situation. Some will be indignant because they will be forced further away from him. Others will feel pity for the cripple. Try to bring out all of these reactions. Ask how the scribes and leaders of the people who were sceptical of Jesus' would react.

The Gospel is prefigured in the song of Isaiah where through a section of hymns to the Lord Redeemer the forgiving nature of God in relation to wayward Israel is highlighted. Where in the First Reading we hear "I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert to give drink to my chosen people" You have burdened me with your sins. I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins." Here human ingratitude and divine mercy meet. Both Israel and God are wearied for different reasons. This is a perfect prelude to the tensions between Jesus who forgives sins and the Jewish leaders who are intolerant and threatened by the power they see before them that eats into their own esteemed position in society.

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: God of Light, You give faith to people. We want to believe in You. We want to believe in the teachings of your Son. Grant us faith to believe that the light of our faith will infect others. Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader: Isaiah 43:22-25
 The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 40
 Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

Glory to you, Lord.

Mark 2:1-12

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
 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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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: Having listened to the Gospel let us call upon our Merciful God for our needs.

For the sick, the homeless, the lonely — the Church. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.

For people suffering in war-torn places. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.

That the people of our country will be examples for the world of people living peacefully together. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.

That in our homes and at school we will be the peacemakers. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.

Leader: God of mercy and peace, you heal the sick, look lovingly upon us and upon 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.

Notes

Readings

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

Jesus came to bring the Good News that would change people's lives. Often, what he said and did upset many of the Jewish leaders, who would not open their hearts and minds to his message of love.



First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET HOSEA

The Lord says this:

"I will lead my people into the desert and speak gently to them. They will turn back to me, as they did when they came out of Egypt. I make you my people for ever, and we will be joined together by fairness and justice, and by love and mercy. I will make you faithful, and you will accept me as your Lord.

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Response:

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.

Psalm 103

The Lord is kind and merciful

Gospel

Mark 2:18-22

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

The followers of John the Baptist and the Pharisees often went without eating. Some people came and asked Jesus, "Why do the followers of John and those of the Pharisees often go without eating, while your disciples never do?" Jesus answered:

"The friends of a bridegroom don't go without eating while he is still with them. But the time will come when he will be taken from them. Then they will go without eating. No one patches old clothes by sewing on a piece of new cloth. The new piece would shrink and tear a bigger hole. No one pours new wine into old wineskins. The wine would swell and burst the old skins. Then the wine would be lost, and the skins would be ruined. New wine must be put into new wineskins."

The Gospel of the Lord

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.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle, symbol of a wedding

Images from the Readings

- Bridegroom
- Food and eating a wedding
- Patches on old clothes
- New wine, new wineskins

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.

Ask the children if they have ever been to a wedding. Who is there? Why are they there? Why are they happy and joyful?

A wedding is a very happy occasion – a time for eating, drinking, dancing and laughter. Jesus told the people who came to him that he was like a bridegroom at the wedding. He reminds the people that they need to be joyful because he is with them. We, too, are people who are filled with joy and hope because Jesus is always with us, even though there are times when we must fast and make sacrifices too. Jesus also compared himself to a new piece of cloth sewn onto old fabric. His ways are new and different from those before him and we need to change our ways if we are to follow him.

Act of Worship

Introduce children to the words from the Preparation of Gifts which Father will pray soon after they rejoin the rest of the congregation:

'Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation, Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become our spiritual drink'

And teach them the response:

'Blessed be God for ever.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The history of God and God's people is a long love story involving serious crises owing to the repeated infidelities of God's chosen one. Hosea in today's First Reading explains the relationship in terms of covenant and marriage.

In the Gospel Jesus is depicted as the bridegroom and his presence determines

how the disciples (and we) are to behave. Mark wants his readers to focus on the appropriate behaviour for disciples. The kingdom of God has come to the people, in Jesus God has visited his people, this marriage of God and his people is the new covenant. Jesus himself is the new covenant and the new relationship is a personal one with all the turmoil of emotions, faithfulness and unfaithfulness that such a close relationship implies.

Hosea was the first to compare the covenant of God and the people as a marriage. He was followed in time by the other prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah. Throughout the Gospels the evangelists use the image of the wedding feast frequently. The emphasis is on the new covenant made eternal in Christ, whose coming is the most important part in making the marriage fully real.

According to Mark, with Jesus present the wedding feast and the covenant have begun, so he asks what need there is of fasting. Only those who do not realise the bridegroom is present continue with their fasting and cling to the old law. It will be time enough to fast after the bridegroom has left. To fast through suffering and persecution. To fast and prepare for final and everlasting reunion. It is against this background that the Church established the seasons of Lent and Advent which culminate in the celebrations of the great vigils of Easter and Christmas.

Reflection for Leaders

The Gospel makes the point that the kingdom that is now at hand is a new creation that will require everyone to shift from their old outlook and acquire new attitudes. The old garment can be seen as a symbol of the old law, the old covenant, and the old relationship.

The people of Jesus' time were familiar with this usage as it is used in the Psalms (Ps 102) and Isaiah (Is 51:9). The point was that the old structure that underpinned the old law would not hold for the new covenant and the renewal of the world. Jesus' presence means that there is to be a new freedom and openness that reaches beyond the letter of the law. Jesus is proclaiming a new life in which we who have put on Christ will accept the trials and tribulations of living Christian lives and not become too attached to the letter of the law, but live within the spirit of the law.

You might talk more about wedding feasts and marriage with the children. Develop the discussion to think about what marriage means. What do the partners to a marriage promise? What are some of the problems that might arise in such a relationship? Try to emphasise the idea of partnership and covenant.

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, thank you for calling us into your family, the Church.
 Help us to be your children in our lives and in our hearts. Amen

FIRST READING

Reader Hosea 2:14-20
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 102
 The Lord is kind and merciful
 (or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader: (if included) 2 Corinthians 3:1-6
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 2:13-22

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark
 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

PRAYERS 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 faith and love, let us pray to our loving God for our needs:

- For the Church, the safe place for those who do wrong
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That peace will flow through all the world
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That our country will lead others in helping the sick and caring for the poor
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will be the first to be friends and help anyone who needs it
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Loving God be gracious and kind to us and to those for whom we pray, shower your blessings on us, and give us your peace,
 we pray through Jesus Christ, our Lord
 All: Amen

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

Notes

Readings

Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

Each one of us is like a clay jar that contains a secret treasure inside. The treasure is God's great love for us, which makes us very special treasures indeed. It also means that when we let God's great love for us guide us in the things we do and say and act, we become like lights that shine. Then everyone else can see God's love too because we are living the way that Jesus taught us.



First Reading Deuteronomy 5: 12-15

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

Moses said to the people: "Keep the Sabbath Day holy, as the Lord commanded. You have six days to do all your work. But the seventh day of the week belongs to the Lord your God. It is the Sabbath, and no one may work on that day."

"This includes you, your children, your servants, and your oxen and donkeys, as well as any other animals of yours. Not even the foreigners who live in your cities are allowed to work on that day. This will let your servants rest when you do."

"Don't forget that you were once slave in Egypt. But the Lord your God reached out his mighty arm and rescued you from there. That's why he commands you to make the Sabbath a special day."

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Response:

Psalm 81

Sing with joy to God our help

Sing as you play tambourines and the lovely sounding stringed instruments.

Sound the trumpets and start the New Moon Festival. We must celebrate when the moon is full.

This is the law in Israel, and it was given to us by the God of Jacob.

The descendants of Joseph were told to obey it,

When God led them out from the land of Egypt.

Gospel Mark 2:23-28

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

One Sabbath, Jesus and his disciples were walking through some grain fields. His disciples were picking grains of wheat as they went along.

Some Pharisees asked Jesus, "Why are your disciples picking grain on the Sabbath? They are not supposed to do that!"

Jesus answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his followers were hungry and in need? It was during the time of Abiathar the high priest. David went into the house of God and ate the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests are allowed to eat. He also gave some to his followers."

Jesus finished by saying, "People were not made for the good of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for the good of the people. So the Son of Man is Lord over the Sabbath."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Second Reading 2 Corinthians 4:6-11

A READING FROM THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brothers and sisters:

The scriptures say, "God commanded the light to shine in the dark." Now God is shining in our hearts to let you know that his glory is seen in Jesus Christ.

We are like clay jars in which this treasure is stored. The real power comes from God and not from us.

We often suffer, but we are never crushed. Even when we don't know what to do, we never give up. In times of trouble, God is with us, and when we are knocked down, we get up again.

We face death every day because of Jesus. Our bodies show what his death was like, so that his life can also be seen in us.

The Word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a bowl of blessed water and a song such as “*Christ Be Our Light*” OR a clay pot or jar

Images from the Readings

- Light to shine in the dark
- Clay jars in which this treasure is stored
- Jesus life can also be seen in us
- Lord over the Sabbath

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? (While everyone listens each child is given the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God.) When each has had an opportunity to speak you might begin general discussion by building on to their responses. (One way of expanding on the responses of the children is to use questions which can be prepared beforehand. Some ideas for questions and a reflection are included above.)

You might discuss with the children possible ways of “keeping holy” “The Sabbath Day” ways that make that one day of the week different and to dedicate it to living out our Christian faith by keeping it free of the usual concerns that mark our lives.

From the beginning of today’s Second Reading take the phrases “Let light shine out of darkness”, “We have this treasure in clay jars”. We have the light of Christ in us through the gift of God at our Baptism. We are asked to allow the light that is in us escape into the world so that those in the world will see that light and be attracted to it. Ask the children what kind of words or actions they or their friends have used this week that might have let the light of Jesus be seen in their lives

Act of Worship

Once again we can use the symbol of the lighted candle. You might gather the children around a large candle placed on a low table with an appropriate colourful cloth and perhaps a bowl of blessed water. Have the children sing a song related to the light of the world theme. At the end of the time for children’s liturgy use a branch to sprinkle the children with the blessed water and send them forth with a blessing to go and let the light of Christ shine in their lives.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The satisfying things about rules is that we can achieve a great sense of accomplishment when we have ticked them all off. The accompanying danger is that they can lull us into thinking we have done all that is necessary, simply because we have kept the letter of the law. The spirit of the law is far more open ended.

Jesus teaching blows fresh air into the stale and hollow rule system which the sacred law had become. In the reading from Deuteronomy we are given the background to the Sabbath law, its origin in our relationship with God and with God’s creative and saving work. In today’s Gospel we have instances of Jesus showing by example the Law being lit, not from self-interested and narrow human perspective, but from God’s perspective.

How are we to keep God’s day holy? “The Sabbath is the day of life, the fulfilment of the creation of heaven and earth.” Days of the Lord vol.5 pg. 81. The Sunday rest gives us, once a week, the leisure time to praise God.

Jesus, steeped in the Jewish law and scriptures teaches his listeners and opponents the new law on observing the Sabbath. We are told that the hardness of heart of his listeners angers him and that the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted to destroy him. How inflexible are we to change in our lives? How often do we prefer to accept the rigid outer values without looking for the underlying realities?

In the reading from 2 Corinthians we are given a worked-out example of living by the Law, lit up Jesus’ way, with the full glory of God. What does such a life look like? We are shown a picture of extraordinary inner joy and light in spite of all the difficulties and dangers that threaten our lives. What we see here is that lives, rooted in God’s grace are a startling example of lives that are set free to live in the joy and presence of God.

Reflection for Leaders

Do you have any containers at home that you have used to keep jewellery or other special moments in? Whether that container is very ordinary or very beautiful, what is special about it is what you keep inside it – and no one can see what is inside unless you take the lid off or tip out the “treasure” to be seen.

St Paul is telling us that people are all a bit like clay pots holding special treasure. Indeed every Sunday that you spend with the children bringing God’s word to life for them, you are role modelling what Paul is talking about. In spite of the time constraints or difficulties that stand in your way, you make time to offer this ministry. In this way you are living the Law of respecting the Sabbath and lighting up the lives of the children with the gift and service of your ministry! During this week, treasure yourself, as God treasures you for bringing the light of his life to these children.

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 loving God, you called us to be children of the light so that others will see the way to you. Help us to always treat other people with respect and love. Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader:

Deuteronomy 5:12-15
The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 80
Sing with joy to God our help.
(another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader:

(if included) 2 Corinthians 4:6-11
The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

Mark 2:23 - 3:6

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
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 previous page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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:

Remembering the words we have just heard let us call upon God who is our help in every way, for our needs:

- For the Church, Mother to those who seek God's ways, that all who turn to her in hope will be warmly welcomed. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- For those who have the courage to speak out in the world, that they will be inspired with love of God and their neighbours, and seek justice and peace for all. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- For the poor, who need food, medicine and a place to live and grow.
Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will care for our children and those who need our love, the unloved and the unwanted. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

Loving and Caring God, you see the need and the desperation in our lives and in the lives of those for whom we pray, change their lives so that they will come to know your great love and make it know throughout the world. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

All:

Amen.

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

Notes

Readings

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus says something amazing. As he sits teaching, surrounded by a large group of people from all different places, families and backgrounds, all eager to hear what he is teaching them about God, he tells them that he counts each one of them as a member of his family – God's family! And that makes all of us in the Church part of the same family. Our distinguishing family likeness is how well we obey God by living the Jesus way.



First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS

The Lord called out to Adam and asked, "Where are you?" Adam answered, "I was naked and when I heard you walking through the garden, I was afraid and hid!" "How did you know you were naked?" God asked. "Did you eat from the tree I told you not to?" Adam said, "It was that woman you put here with me! She gave me some of the fruit and I ate it." The Lord God then asked her, "What have you done?" The woman answered, "The snake tricked me into eating some of that fruit." The Lord God said to the snake, "Because of what you have done, you will suffer a greater curse than the cattle and the wild animals. For as long as you live, you will crawl on your stomach and eat dirt from the ground. You and this woman will hate each other. Your descendants and hers will always be enemies. One of them will crush your head, and you will bite him on the heel."

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Response

Psalm 130

With the Lord there is mercy

From a sea of troubles I call out to you, Lord. Won't you please listen as I beg for mercy?

If you kept record of our sins, no one could last long. But you forgive us, and so we will worship you.

Gospel Short Form

Mark 3: 20-21, 31-35

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus went back home, and once again such a large crowd gathered that there was no chance even to eat. When Jesus' family heard what he was doing, they thought he was crazy and went to get him under control.

Jesus' mother and brothers came and stood outside. Then they sent someone with a message for him to come out to them. The crowd that was sitting around Jesus told him, "Your mother and brothers and sisters are outside and want to see you."

Jesus asked, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" Then he looked at the people sitting around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who obeys God is my brother or sister or mother."

The Gospel of the Lord

Second reading

2 Corinthians 4: 16-5:1

A READING FROM THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brothers and sisters: We never give up. Our bodies are gradually dying, but we ourselves are being made stronger every day. These little troubles are getting us ready for an eternal glory that will make all our troubles seem like nothing.

Things that are seen don't last forever, but things that are not seen are eternal. That's why we keep our minds on the things that cannot be seen.

Our bodies are like tents that we live in here on earth. But when these tents are destroyed, we know that God will give each of us a place to live. These homes will not be buildings that someone has made. But they are in heaven and will last forever.

The Word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, picture of a family, a bowl of holy water

Images from the Readings

- Who is my mother, my brothers and sisters?
- Where are you?
- What have you done?
- God will give each of us a place to live

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: Begin with the question - What did you hear? (Everyone listen as each child is given the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God.) When each child has had an opportunity to speak you might begin general discussion by building on the responses offered by the children with some prepared questions about the Readings. Some ideas for questions and reflection follow.

Questions: Think about the people in your own special family: Who is a brother? Who is a sister? Who has an uncle? Who has a Grandma? What are some of the different names people use to name their Grandfather? (Grand dad, Poppa, Opa, Nonna) . Take time to talk about the way we might share a family likeness: do we look a bit like other people in our family, perhaps the same colour eyes, the same shape nose, the same curly hair or how we walk or laugh. Sometimes we are like other people in our family in liking to be quiet or noisy, being good at sport or enjoying music....

One day Jesus was sitting talking to a circle of friends and visitors, rather like we are sitting now. Someone told him that his mother, his brothers and sisters were outside wanting to see him. Jesus looked around at all the people he was with and told them that everyone who chooses to live God's special way of life is really part of his own close family. That means us as well. When we are living God's way as Jesus teaches us to do, then we all share the same family likeness.

Act of Worship

Remind the children that our Church has a special way of welcoming people as members of God's family. We baptise them in holy water. Then every time we come to Church we remind ourselves that we are members of God's family by dipping our fingers in the holy water font and making the sign of the cross on our bodies. Invite the children to stand in a circle and take the bowl of baptismal water to them so they can dip their fingers and make the sign of the cross on their body, saying the words that remind us we all belong to God's family – "In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen."

Background to the Readings for Leaders

For the next six months of Ordinary time we will be reading from the Gospel of Mark. Today the reading from Genesis is chosen to balance the reading from Mark. It reminds us that God is always acting like a loving parent who cares about us, wanting to know where we are, what we are doing, and helping us to learn from the mistakes that we have made or trying to protect us from the dangerous things that may threaten our lives.

The terrible thing about sin is the way it causes separation between God and his people. So much self-deceit, thoughtless choices or destructive life patterns are really to do with hiding our selves from God. It is not difficult to see a similar sort of pattern in the lives of our children as they set out to explore their world – how easy it is for them to get into trouble or danger or unhealthy habits while we as adults try to teach them or protect them from danger. The hardest thing of all is to realise that in spite of all our care, we could not make the difference we wanted to "save" our child. Try to read the Genesis story from this perspective and see if it sheds new light on the story for you.

So much of Jesus teaching is about showing people how to feel comfortable in God's presence once again. Jesus is a great healer. St Paul reminds us of this when he talks about the ongoing spiritual healing that happens for those who live in Christ – even if their physical body is wearing out. A professional tentmaker himself, he uses the metaphor of physical death as merely a folding-up of the tent of one's physical body so the spirit can live on, "at home" with God forever. In the Gospel reading of this day Jesus looks at those around him with the same kind of love and affection that he holds for his own family. He recognises that God's love is beyond the ties of blood and genes. Spiritually we are all bound together as members of God's great family, as close to Jesus as his own family. What distinguishes us as members of God's family is the family likeness of doing God's will – living the loving way.

Reflection for Leaders

Whether we live on our own or with others, most of us have experience of living as members of a family. Take time to reflect on your own family experiences – who you are close too? who you do not see so often? What are the reasons? Take time to reflect also on the family likenesses you share – those you appreciate – those you might have difficulty accepting. Is there anything in your family story that is crying out to be appreciated more – or healed because it has caused pain or separation? What steps could you take this week to enter more fully into your own experience of family life? Is there some assistance that is needed? How is your experience of family life reflected back to you through the bigger story of family life as a member of God's inclusive, welcoming, healing embrace that longs to heal the rifts and overcome the divisions and separation in God's family members? It is an honour to be considered a close relative of Jesus. Do you think you behave as though this is true? Jesus said, "Anyone who obeys God is my brother or sister or mother." What family likeness do you show?

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 loving God, as brothers and sisters of Jesus, we gather together as one family to worship you and give you praise. Help us to always treat each other with love and kindness, just as you taught us to. Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader: Genesis 3:8-15
 The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 129
 With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.
(another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader: *(if included)* 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1
 The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 3:20-35

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
 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

PRAYERS 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 our needs:

- For a church that invites everyone to belong to it, let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- For the poor of the world, that those with enough food will look to their needs, let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- For government that sees to the needs of the poor, let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- For those who hurt us, let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

God of Resurrection and Life, hear the prayers we your children make to you. Through Christ our Lord.

All:

Amen.

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

Notes

Readings

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

The seed in today's parable does not rely on a gardener's constant attention – it is quite capable of growing wonderfully on its own, simply because it is a living seed. Whenever we sow the seed of God's love or God's Word in someone's heart, God will continue the work of growth there, using all the circumstances of that person's experience to develop the growing.



First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

The Lord God said: "I will cut a tender twig from the very top of a cedar tree and plant it on the peak of a tall mountain. I will plant it on the highest mountain in Israel. It will put out branches and grow into a beautiful and useful cedar tree. All kinds of birds will find shelter under it and shade in its branches.

"Every tree in the forest will know that I, the Lord, bring down tall trees and make short trees grow tall. I dry up green trees and make dried trees turn green again. I, the Lord, have spoken! And I will keep my word."

The Word of the Lord

**Responsorial Psalm
Response**

Psalm 92

Lord it is good to give thanks to you

It is wonderful to be grateful and to sing your praises, Lord Most High!

It is wonderful each morning to tell about your love and at night to announce how faithful you are.

Good people will prosper like palm trees, and they will grow strong like the cedars of Lebanon.

They will take root in your house, Lord God, and they will do well.

Gospel

Mark 4: 30-34

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus said: "What is God's Kingdom like? What story can I use to explain it? It is like what happens when a mustard seed is planted in the ground. It is the smallest seed in all the world. But once it is planted, it grows larger than any garden plant. It even puts out branches that are big enough for birds to rest in its shade."

Jesus used many other stories when he spoke to people, and he taught them as much as they could understand. But when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them.

The Gospel of the Lord

Second Reading

2 Corinthians 5: 6-10

A READING FROM THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brother and sisters:

Always be cheerful! As long as we are in these bodies, we are away from the Lord. But we live by faith, not by what we see.

We should be cheerful, because we would rather leave these bodies and be at home with the Lord. But whether we are at home with the Lord or away from him, we still do our best to please him. After all, Christ will judge each of us for the good or the bad that we do while living in these bodies.

The Word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, candle, mustard seeds, a tray of soil, water
(*Mustard seed is available from a Garden Centre. You may wish to provide a container to plant some mustard seeds in so the children can see them sprout in later weeks – or bring some that are sprouted ahead of time.*)

Images from the Readings

- Mustard seed – the smallest seed in all the world
- Birds rest in its shade
- Always be cheerful

Discussion Points

Take along a selection of seeds and ask the children what they think each will become. Then tell them the pine tree seed has the tree inside it but we cannot see it, the carrot seed has the carrot inside it but we cannot see that either. Each is present in the seed but cannot be seen. Give the children some mustard seed to hold in their hands. Ask 2 children to stand back to back on 2 chairs and spread out their arms. Jesus said that given the right conditions, this tiny mustard seed could grow as big as this. Talk over with the children the different things that seeds need to grow. Why do you think Jesus says that the kingdom of God grows just like a mustard seed? Can you look back and remember that you have grown taller over the last year or so? Can you look back and realise that you understand more about living the Jesus way than you did a year ago, or how you are getting more used to talking with God in prayer, or starting to think more about right and wrong and learning to make good choices? All these different things show how the kingdom of God is growing inside you, a bit like a seed grows in the earth. All that good growing is about you letting God grow to life in you. Can you think of some other ways that you can see the Kingdom of God growing in yourself or growing in others? What do you think of the story Jesus used to explain what God's Kingdom is like?

Act of Worship

Sing a song about the Kingdom of God (or re-read the short parable) and invite the children to sprinkle their mustard seed(s) on the tray of soil. Water the seeds to start them growing. Remind the children of the water of baptism that started their life as members of God's family. End with the 'echo prayer':

Our Father in heaven,
let your kingdom come.
Let it come in me and my family.
Let it come in my school and my church.
All over the world, Father,
Let your kingdom come.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Today's readings grew out of situations of hopelessness where it was felt that God didn't seem to be winning. They call for trust in the God of history who is at work in human hearts even when the results cannot be perceived. Ezekiel's parable dates from when Jerusalem has been overrun by the Babylonians and the leaders of the people taken into exile. (A great eagle - Babylon - breaks off the top branch of the cedar - the royal house of Judah - and carries it away.) The nations seem to have no future. The prophet moves on to a vision of hope - from the top of the cedar (the royal house) God will take a shoot and transplant it in Israel. From it will grow a new tree providing shelter for every kind of bird. In the Second Reading Paul too is writing from a situation of weakness - in prison possibly under the sentence of death, relations are strained with the community he helped to found in Corinth - he is unsure if his work will go on and not sure how long he has to live. He speaks of hope "We are always full of confidence... after all, this is a life of exile; "home" is with the Lord."

The Gospel passage seems to be a response to those who are discouraged that nothing seems to be happening. (could such small beginnings really be the germ of a kingdom?) The image of the growing seed emphasises the helpless role of the farmer - the forces of nature work away quietly and mysteriously without any intervention from him. So the kingdom grows in peoples hearts in God's own way, whether we are aware of it or not. The mention of birds finding shelter in the branches of the mustard tree is probably the influence of Ezekiel - Mark writing for a non Jewish audience would appreciate the reference to all nations finding a place in the kingdom. In the ancient world the size of a mustard seed was a byword for the smallest and most insignificant thing anyone could imagine. Note also that the phrase "birds of the air" was a traditional Jewish expression for the Gentiles - all the non-Jewish people.

Reflection for Leaders

The greatness of the kingdom that Jesus and Ezekiel are talking about in today's readings grows from a small beginning, its size can be compared to that of the mustard seed. It is for the benefit of all peoples; it is not the exclusive domain of any one flock. Compare the small beginnings of Jesus' ministry in Galilee with the spread of his message throughout the world and appreciate the vast growth that has taken place over the years. God's kingdom grows of its own accord, in its own way, often unseen, unrecognised, and undetected in the world. We cannot be complacent but we can save ourselves from feelings of pessimism, cynicism and despair. We can rejoice in God's work that welcomes and attracts so many different people, the kingdom that we are part of and which we seem to be sharing with so many strange birds.

The little seed of God's kingdom is someone opening themselves up to the possibility of God being real and active in their lives. Gradually it grows in them. Perhaps they ask more questions about God, or try to seek more meaning from the Bible, or come to church more often. Perhaps they begin to talk more to God in prayer or seek help from God with the questions in their lives. Perhaps a verse from scripture hits home

with new and deeper meaning or perhaps there is a realisation that their life needs to change. Perhaps they receive some special kindness from someone in a time of difficulty or sorrow.

Where do you see yourself opening up more to God's Kingdom in your life?

How can you help to open the hearts of the children to the surprises and small beginnings of God's plan for their lives?

Notes

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:

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, your Word is planted in our hearts. Help us to grow in kindness, love, understanding, and forgiveness so that we can share the good news and help God's kingdom grow. Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader: Ezekiel 17:22-24
 The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 91
 Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.
(another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader: (if included) 2 Corinthians 5:6-17
 The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark. 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

PRAYERS 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 the God of all creation for our needs:

- For a Church that reaches out to everybody. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.
- For the poor and forgotten people of the world. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.
- For the unloved ones of Aotearoa New Zealand. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.

- For the grace to be kind to all those in our family and all those at school. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.

Leader: God of Resurrection and Life hear the prayers we the children of your Church make to you. Through Jesus 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

What kind of person is this? Even the wind and waves obey him. Often in life we will find that when we have invited Jesus into our boat – into our life – we don't get so thrown by all the stormy things that happen in our lives. If we panic too much we can't always hear Jesus helping us to weather the storm until things calm down a bit. Then we realise that with God in charge we don't actually need to be so terrified.



First reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF JOB

From the storm the Lord said to Job: "After the ocean was born, I enclosed it with a wall. I used the mist for its baby clothes and covered it with clouds. I marked out its boundaries and locked it behind doors. "Then I said to the ocean, 'Your raging waves stop here! This is as far as you go!'"

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 107

Response: **Give thanks to the Lord, God's love is everlasting.**

Some of you made a living sailing the mighty sea, and you saw the miracles the Lord performed there.

At his command a storm arose and waves covered the sea.

You were in serious trouble, but you prayed to the Lord and he rescued you.

He made the storm stop and the sea be quiet. You were happy because of this.

And he brought you to the port where you wanted to go.

Second reading

2 Corinthians 5: 14-17

A READING FROM THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brothers and sisters: We are ruled by Christ's love for us. We are certain that if one person died for everyone else, then all of us have died. And Christ did die for all of us. He died so we would no longer live for ourselves, but for the one who died and was raised to life for us. We are careful not to judge people by what they seem to be, though we once judged Christ in that way. Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten and everything is new.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel

Mark 4:35-41

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross over to the east side." So they left the crowd, and his disciples started across the lake with him in the boat.

Some other boats followed along. Suddenly a windstorm struck the lake. Waves started splashing into the boat, and it was about to sink.

Jesus was in the back of the boat with his head on a pillow, and he was asleep. His disciples woke him and said, "Teacher, don't you care that we're about to drown?" Jesus got up and ordered the wind and the waves to be quiet. The wind stopped, and everything was calm.

Jesus asked his disciples, "Why are you afraid? Don't you have any faith?"

Now they were more afraid than ever and said to each other, "Who is this? Even the winds and waves obey him!"

The Gospel of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a model sailing ship or picture of the ocean

Images from the Readings

- Across the lake
- Windstorm struck
- Be quiet
- Calm
- Everything is new

Discussion points

In the First Reading what sort of a picture did you get of God? What feelings does the reading give you about God? When you look at creation, the trees, sea, wind, sun shining in great hollow shafts through autumn burnt leaves. What do you feel? Do you feel the wonder and the gift of God's work? Which words did you like most in the First Reading? What sort of a God does the Psalm sing about?

In the Gospel story how do you think the disciples felt before they woke Jesus? Have you ever experienced a storm, were you afraid? When you are afraid what do you do? What did the disciples in the story do?

Reassure the children that it is perfectly all right to feel afraid and scared in a storm, and like the disciples to find someone who can help us or comfort us.

Perhaps the children can also think of times when they have helped to calm someone down or comfort them when they have been afraid or worried.

Jesus is like that. When we are frightened or scared or upset, whether we're children or adults, we can all come to Jesus and he will help to calm us down and comfort us. He may do that through our family and he may use your words and arms to comfort other people or other creatures.

Sometimes you will find that as you ask Jesus to help calm you down, you will suddenly feel calm inside just like it feels after a big storm has finished.

Jesus is more than an ordinary teacher, he has God's power to draw on. We can see in Jesus the power and love of God.

Act of Worship

Sing a song of peace, e.g. *Peace is flowing like a river, flowing out through you and me*

OR Demonstrate and invite the children to exchange the Sign of Peace with each other.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

In the First Reading after Job's comforters have had their say, and failed to answer his question: "Why do the just suffer?" God speaks to him "from the heart of the storm" words from the mouth of Isaiah "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are my ways above your ways". So this passage stresses God's power over the sea, and all of creation. The Hebrews were never sea going people, and stood in awe of its thunderous waves. They were affected by ancient myths which saw the sea as the source of evil and chaos. The image of an all powerful God holding back the waves beating at the shore was a symbol of God's power to limit evil and destruction. Speaking from the tempest is always a powerful manifestation of the might of God.

In the Gospel we have the first of Mark's miracle-stories framed in a storm at sea. Jesus suggests to his followers that they cross the lake to the other side. The sun has set and soon it would be nightfall. The pressing crowds are left behind, but what lay ahead? The lake was normally calm, but because of its position - about seven hundred feet below sea level - it is subject to sudden wind storms which sweep down from the surrounding hills rush through the narrow gorges that break upon the lake and whip up the saucer like sea. It is clear that Mark intends the raging sea to be a symbol of the forces of evil. The words Jesus addresses to the sea are words he uses to drive out devils; words that could be addressed to a snapping dog: Shut up! Down! It has been said that Jesus' miracles are not designed to produce the spectacular, but to restore things to normal.

Reflection for Leaders

The disciples wake Jesus with an accusation - master do you not care we are going down! After calming the sea and their fear, Jesus rebukes them for their great fear and small amount of faith it is then that the question arises "Who then is this man?"

We know who Jesus is. But the question remains for us, will our faith in Jesus stay with us even during threat and danger and storm? The disciples experience is not unknown to us. We believe that Jesus accompanies us on our journey to God. To journey with him is to journey through storms rather than around them, we must nurture a strong belief that Jesus is "Lord of all chaos", that there is no storm that will not be calmed at last by his presence.

You might point out to the children that often we can have stormy weather inside us. Discuss how storms of worries, problems and life's troubles can assail us and how, since Jesus is always with us he has the power to calm and make smooth these storms too. Suggest that when we feel shaken inside by worries, fear, anger or trouble we can ask Jesus to calm the storm inside us.

This Gospel passage lends itself readily to dramatisation in the form of some mime work. You could go over firstly with the children the bare bones of the story. The calm sea, Jesus falling asleep in the boat, the wind coming up, whipping up the sea, the boat beginning to move with the wind, beginning to be rocked, then tossed about by the waves. Then the human drama, the faith, calm and the security felt by the disciples to have Jesus with them and sleeping in the stern of the boat. Then the

coming of the wind and the growing turbulence of the sea and with it the disciples mounting anxiety, their fear rising to panic driving them eventually to awaken Jesus, who acts and calms down the storm, once more the waters are calm and the boat is still, but the disciples are jumpy and wondering and still fearful, asking themselves who can Jesus be. Often in life we will find that when we have invited Jesus into our boat – into our life – we don't get so thrown by all the stormy things that happen in our lives. If we panic too much we can't always hear Jesus helping us to weather the storm until things calm down a bit. The we realise that with God in charge we don't actually need to be so terrified.

Notes

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: Lord Jesus, you are always with us. You bring peace and tranquility into our lives. Help us to bring your peace to those we meet. Amen.

FIRST READING

Job 38:1-11

Reader: The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 106

Give thanks to the Lord, God's love is everlasting.
(another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING*(if included)* 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Reader: The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 4:35-41

Minister of the Word:

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
 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****PRAYERS 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 our needs:

- For Church leaders throughout the world, let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- For people to care for the world, the plants, insects and animals, the waters, the earth, the sea and the air, let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- For The land Aotearoa New Zealand, God's land, that no one will claim ownership of it, so that it shall be for the use to all God's people, let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will show, by the way we live, respect for all of God's creation, let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

Almighty and constant God hear the prayers we your children make to you. Through Jesus our Lord.
 Amen.

All:

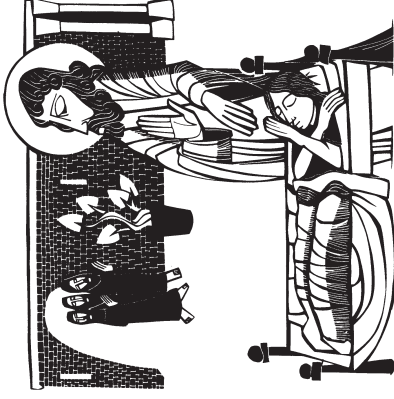
The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Readings

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

*In today's gospel, Jesus brings a young girl back to life again. She hears his call to her, "Talitha, koum" and follows it through a journey we can only imagine, emerging to return to the world she had left, in full health and very hungry. He could do that because Jesus **is** life.*



Gospel Short form

Mark 5:21-24, 35-43

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus got into the boat and crossed Lake Galilee. Then, as he stood on the shore, a large crowd gathered around him. The person in charge of the Jewish meeting place was also there. His name was Jairus, and when he saw Jesus, he went over to him. He knelt at Jesus' feet and started begging for help. He said, "My daughter is about to die! Please come and touch her, so she will get well and live!" Jesus went with Jairus. Many people followed and kept crowding around. A little while later, some men came from Jairus' home and said, "Your daughter has died! Why bother the teacher any more?" Jesus heard what they said, and he said to Jairus, "Don't worry. Just have faith!" Jesus did not let anyone go with him except Peter and the two brothers, James and John. They went with Jairus and saw the people crying and making a lot of noise.

The Jesus went inside and said to them, "Why are you crying and carrying on like this? The child is not dead. She is just asleep." But the people laughed at him. After Jesus had sent them all out of the house, he took the girl's mother and father and his three disciples and went to where she was. He took the twelve year-old girl by the hand and said, "Talitha, koum!" which means, "Little girl, get up!" The girl got up and started walking around.

Everyone was greatly surprised. But Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened. Then he said, "Give her something to eat."

The Gospel of the Lord.

First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF WISDOM

God did not create death, but he is sad whenever a living creature dies. God made everything, and there is a reason for every living creature. No deadly poison is in them, and the kingdom of death doesn't rule the earth. Goodness will never die. God created us to live for ever, just as he does. But the Devil was jealous and brought death into the world.

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalms 30

I will praise you Lord, for you have rescued me.

Your faithful people, Lord, will praise you with songs and honour your holy name. At night we may cry, but when morning comes we will celebrate.

Have pity, Lord! Help! You have turned my sorrow to dancing. I will never stop singing your praises, my Lord and my God.

Second Reading

2 Corinthians 8: 7,9, 13-14

A READING FROM THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brothers and sister: You do everything better than anyone else. You have stronger faith. You speak and know more. You are eager to give, and you love us better. Now you must give more generously than anyone else.

You know that our Lord Jesus Christ was kind enough to give up all his riches and become poor, so that you could become rich.

I am not trying to make life easier for others by making life harder for you. But it is only fair for you to share with them when you have so much, and they have so little. Later, when they have more than enough, and you are in need, they can share with you. Then everyone will have a fair share.

The Word of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a poster with the words *Talitha, kourm* and *Maranatha* printed on them

Images from the Readings

- Don't worry.
- Have faith
- Get up
- Give her something to eat
- Everyone will have a fair share

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. When each has had an opportunity to speak you might begin general discussion by building on to their responses. Help the children to focus on the "feelings" in this particular gospel reading by using some prepared questions like the following: How would Jairus have felt when he learned his daughter was dying? How do you think Jesus might feel when Jairus called on him for help? How did the people at Jairus' home feel? What were they doing? How might the little girl feel when she was healed by Jesus? How might Jesus have felt when people laughed at them? What words could describe how the family felt when their little girl got out of bed, healed. At the appropriate time in the conversation you might go over the Aramaic words, *Talitha, kourm* which Jesus used. They are translated for us as "little girl, get up"

When the children have had time to think through these questions and talk them over ask them when they have called on Jesus for help. How were they feeling at the time? What difference did Jesus make for them? Does this story change the way we might treat other people? Why?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to choose one of the aramaic phrases, *talitha kourm* – ("little girl, get up") OR *Maranatha* – ("come Lord Jesus, come") as a prayer mantra for a time of meditation. Once each child has chosen their word, invite them to sit very still and straight. Close their eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert. Silently, inside their minds, begin to say their chosen word. Tell them to listen to this special word as they say it gently but continuously inside their mind, letting their thoughts and images pass gently by. Invite them to just keep turning their attention back to saying their special prayer word from the beginning to the end of their time of meditation.

Background to the Readings:

The Book of Wisdom, written only a generation before the birth of Christ was the last of the Hebrew Scriptures to be written before his birth. It accepts an idea that came late to Hebrew thought, the idea of immortality, of life after death. In the First Reading, death means not physical death but the death of the spirit. We all must die physically, but for God's faithful death changes life, doesn't end it. Death gives way to the bright promise of immortality.

In the Gospel, the story of the women suffering from a haemorrhage has been sandwiched into the story of Jairus' daughter, just at the point between Jairus' plea for help and them receiving the news of the death of his daughter. There are some similarities in the two stories, the number of years for instance - the woman had been suffering for twelve years and the girl was twelve years old, more important though is the emphasis on faith in the two stories. Jairus asks Jesus to lay his hands on his daughter to make her better and save her life, and when news of her death comes Jesus tells him, "Don't worry, just have faith." The woman expects to be healed by touching Jesus but he points out that it is her faith that has healed her. We almost feel that she has healed herself, through her belief, that it is her miracle, not Jesus'. The word used for "get well" also means "save" The physical healing is only a sign of a deeper healing - salvation. Mark depicts Jesus as one with unprecedented power and authority. On this occasion power over that final, fearful human misery - death. Death, as Mark's Gospel will eventually reveal, has no finality in the presence of Jesus. He has the victory.

"For me you have changed my mourning into dancing,

O Lord my God, I will thank you forever."

Ps 29:13

Reflection on the Readings for Leaders:

To Jesus all our dead, children and loved ones, are but asleep in death. As the risen Lord he will come to awaken them. That is our faith. That is why the words addressed to Jairus are addressed to us all "Don't worry (or be afraid), just have faith." This Gospel story is given to us as Good News to nourish our faith in Jesus, to re-light our hope in his power over death itself. It is a strong message to those who see death as the end, as the last word in every human story. Our faith tells us differently. Those who choose to live and act in faith have life. Mark is telling us to take Jairus as an example. His daughter lived because Jairus believed in Jesus. Mark is revealing to us too, Jesus' power over death.

What Jesus did here for Jairus' daughter he will do for us all, at the end of time, we will be raised up to live with him forever.

Have you ever been unable to help yourself; totally dependent on another person for your needs?

Do you feel any special bond with any of the characters in this gospel? In what ways do you associate with them?

In what ways does your community recognise and give honour to the role women play in the life of the Parish?

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, as we gather to hear your Word today grant that our faith may be strong and a love for you be in our hearts. Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader:

Wisdom 1:13-15, 2:23-24
The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 29

I will praise you, Lord, you have rescued me.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader:

(if included) 2 Corinthians 8:7-15
The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

□

Mark 5:21-43 (Short form- Mark 5: 21-24, 35-43)
A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark
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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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:

Inspired by today's readings let us call upon our loving God for our needs:

- For the church, home of the poor, that it will lead with strong faith that shines out for all to see. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.
- That all people will find faith and belief in their lives. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.
- For the people of Aotearoa New Zealand, that we will take care of our poor. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will show our belief in Jesus by the way we live. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

Loving and generous God you see our need always, gather us and those for whom we pray to yourself, hear our prayer, through Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

All:

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

Notes

Readings

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

In the time of Jesus, Nazareth was a little town in the hill country of Galilee. Jesus spent his childhood there living with his parents Mary and Joseph. During a return visit to Nazareth he found that he was not welcome anymore.



Gospel

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus left and returned to his hometown with his disciples. The next Sabbath he taught in the Jewish meeting place.

Many of the people who heard him were amazed and asked, "How can he do all this? Where did he get such wisdom and the power to work these miracles? Isn't he the carpenter, the son of Mary? Aren't James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon his brothers? Don't his sisters still live here in our town?"

The people were very unhappy because of what he was doing. But Jesus said, "Prophets are honoured by everyone, except the people of their hometown and their relatives and their own family."

Jesus could not work any miracles there, except to heal a few sick people by placing his hands on them. He was surprised that the people did not have any faith.

The Gospel of the Lord.

First reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

As the Lord spoke, his Spirit gave me the power to stand, and I heard him say: "You are a mere human, but I am sending you to the people of Israel. All of them have rebelled against me, and they are still rebelling, just as their ancestors did. They are stubborn and hardheaded.

"But I am the Lord God, and I am sending you to speak to them in my name. They are stubborn. So maybe they will listen and maybe they won't. But at least they will know that a prophet has come to them."

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Response

Lord, you are good and forgiving

Psalm 86

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

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

A READING FROM THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Brothers and sisters:

I am now referring to the wonderful things I saw.

One of Satan's angels was sent to make me suffer terribly, so that I would not feel too proud. Three times I begged the Lord to make this suffering go away. But he replied, "My kindness is all you need. My power is strongest when you are weak."

So if Christ keeps giving me his power, I will gladly brag about how weak I am. Yes, I am glad to be weak or insulted or mistreated or to have troubles and sufferings, if it is for Christ.

Because when I am weak, I am strong.

The Word of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, sculpture/picture of hands

Images from the Readings

- Hometown
- Very unhappy
- Did not have any faith
- Placing his hands on them
- A prophet has come to them

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow the 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 each has had an opportunity to speak you might begin general discussion by building on to their responses.

Have you ever felt misunderstood or shunned or rejected or that someone is making fun of you because you have spoken the truth in a certain situation? Why do you think this happens? How did you deal with this – or who helped you deal with us? What is a prophet? (A Prophet is someone who listens very deeply to God's word and is used by God to teach people truthfully about the way God wants them to live)

The prophet is often unwelcome among people. Especially among those who think they already know him or her very well. Prophets ruffle our feathers. Make us feel uncomfortable. Needle us. How do you feel about people who always remind you of your faults? Think up some words to describe them.

Two people in today's readings were prophets sent by God to live among his chosen people. Ezekiel and Jesus. Both pointed out to the people where they were moving away from God's plan for them. Both were unpopular with the people. Why do you think this was so?

What is the message for us in this story?

Who do you think are the prophets in your school/parish/ city/ country today?

Act of Worship **Penitential Rite**

For the times I have not listened to the message from God's Word
Lord have mercy

For the times I have not behaved as I should
Christ have mercy

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The First Reading: Ezekiel's call came at a hard time, Jerusalem had been destroyed and he was among the people who were expelled to Babylon. Ezekiel was being sent to a defiant and obstinate people and like Jeremiah he was warned from the start that he must be prepared to meet misunderstanding and rejection. Despite the harsh tone the message expresses God's fidelity.

Mark's Gospel portrays Jesus as suffering a similar fate to that of Ezekiel and the other Jewish prophets of old —rejection of him and his message. There is a deliberate slur on his name too as the people of his home town wonder about him aloud "the son of Mary" —In the world of ancient Israel peoples last names were formed from their father's last name, unless they were illegitimate, no one was ever referred to as the son of their mother. Jesus is profoundly affected by the way people react to him, mistrust here somehow disables him. His ministry amongst his own people is limited by their lack of trust and so he moves on and never returns to Nazareth again.

Reflection for Leaders

Why do prophets make us feel so uncomfortable? Why do they bring out the violence in people?

We can domesticate Jesus, remake him in our own image through long interpretations of his story and be so familiar with his words that they lose their cutting edge. He demands greater than that though, he came to shake up our cosy world.

Seeing Jesus as he is, the only possible responses are rejection or faith.

Paul talks about rejection and of his own weaknesses. He reflects that his weaknesses are not a problem for God as they are for himself and this revelation forces him to change his image of God. He learned that God's grace works through human frailty and so he says "For it is when I am weak, that I am strong." For many of us this appears to be a contradiction. Educated to win and to accept nothing less than perfection. Being content with our weaknesses does not come easy for us. When we are beaten down by our own failures, limitations and weaknesses it is easy to think we are worthless to ourselves and to God. Paul tells us that's not how it is at all. He says that God waits on our weaknesses to bloom so that through them God's purpose may be wrought.

We must believe in the person of Jesus. We must be prepared for the ultimate faith question, "Who do you say that I am?"

"Weakness and suffering enable the Christian to clear a space within herself (himself) where the power of Christ can dwell." - Adrian Nocent OSB.

You might discuss with the children the qualities that a prophet needs. (These can be listed on a large sheet of paper.) And ask if they know of anyone who could be called a prophet. We might all be called to be prophets at some time in our lives. When the time comes to stand out from the crowd and to be bold in proclaiming what we believe to be right and just we must be ready. Ready to say “yes” and to be open to the spirit of God that guides us. Pray with the children that they will be ready if called upon to be prophets. And that they will have all the gifts of strength and courage that they need to do the job of prophet well. You could help the children to draw up a description of the sort of person God is looking for to be a messenger to the people. Maybe it could be drawn up like an advertisement in the “Situations Vacant” column of a newspaper.

Notes

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 have called us to be your children. Help us to always be ready to do as we should and to help others to come to you.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader:

Ezekiel 2:1-5
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

Reader:

(if included) 2 Corinthians 12:2-10
The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

Mark 6:1-13

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 and strong faith let us call upon God for our needs:

- For the Church home of the faithful that it will bring light into the world.
Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That there will be peace in the world. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- That the land of Aotearoa New Zealand will welcome all people of good will.
Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will learn to live side by side in harmony with all people.
Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

Generous God have mercy on us and on those for whom we pray, and hear our prayers which we make through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

All:

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

Readings

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

When Jesus sends out his disciples, he sends them in pairs, to be a support for each other.

We need to ask ourselves two questions: how ready are we to speak out God's truth when we know it will make us unpopular? How best can we support and encourage each other to live and work as Jesus asks us to do, especially if we are in an environment that is hostile to hearing the good news of God's love.



First Reading

Amos 7: 10-15

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET AMOS

Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent this message to Jereboam the king of Israel: "Amos is plotting against you in the very heart of Israel. Our nation cannot put up with his message for very long. Here is what he is saying: 'Jereboam will be put to death, and the people will be taken to a foreign country.'"

Amaziah told Amos, "Take your visions and leave! Go back to Judah and earn your living there as a prophet. Don't do any more preaching here at Bethel. The king worships here, and this is our national temple."

Amos answered, "I'm not a prophet! And I wasn't trained to be a prophet. I raise livestock and take care of fig trees. But the Lord told me to leave my herds and preach to the people of Israel."

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalms 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.

Second Reading

Ephesians 1:3-10

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

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 had 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. God was very kind to us because of the Son he dearly loves, and so we should praise God.

Christ sacrificed his life's blood to set us free, which means that our sins are forgiven. Christ did this because God was so kind to us.

God has great wisdom and understanding, and by what Christ has done, God has shown us his own mysterious ways. Then, when the time is right, God will do all that he has planned, and Christ will bring together everything in heaven and on earth.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel

Mark 6: 7-13

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus called together his twelve apostles and sent them out two by two with power over evil spirits. He told them: "You may take along a walking stick. But don't carry food or a travelling bag or any money. It's all right to wear sandals, but don't take a change of clothes.

When you are welcomed into a home, stay there until you leave that town. If any place won't welcome you or listen to your message, leave and shake the dust from your feet as a warning to them."

The apostles left and started telling everyone to turn to God. They forced out many demons and healed a lot of sick people by anointing them with oil

The Gospel of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a walking stick and sandals.

Images from the Readings

- Leave
- Called and sent
- Turn to God
- Anointing with oil

Discussion Points

Can you think of a time when you have been asked to do something new or different for the very first time that made you feel very unsure or worried about how you would do it? (First day in a new school, being asked to do a new job or taking on some responsibility without much help or preparation) Can you remember how that felt? How did you manage? Did you make any mistakes? What did you learn from this experience?

Amos is someone who was sent to do a new job for God: "Go and prophesy to my people Israel." But the people of the land want to throw him out for his message is distasteful to them. So why do you think Amos is being told to "Take your visions and leave! Go back to Judah..."? What is Amos' reply?

Amos is another of the prophets sent by God to be a messenger to the people. He is treated by the chosen people in much the same way as they treated Ezekiel in last week's reading. With scorn and contempt and closed hearts.

The word Apostle means "a person who is sent" In today's Gospel Jesus gives his Apostles a new job. He sends them out to preach the Good News with these instructions: (lay down the walking stick and the sandals) Jesus told his disciples they weren't to take anything for the journey except a walking stick and sandals – no food, no travelling bag, no money and no change of clothes and warns them that they, like he, might be rejected. Why do you think he wanted them to travel light like this, instead of taking everything they wanted with them? Draw the children to see this could be sensible because they wouldn't have to worry about being robbed; they would have to depend on God and the people they worked with to give them food and shelter; it would give other people lots of opportunities to be generous and helpful towards them; it would show others that they were not out to make money from those in need; by being needy themselves they were sharing in the hardships of God's people and showing that God's love can be clearly seen when people look after one another. This way of life is a real sign or "uniform" of prophets and apostles, of holy men and women and children of all ages. They/we are to teach everyone, encouraging them to change their hearts and their lives healing those who are ill, feeding the hungry, giving comfort to those who are frightened and worried.

Can you think of some ways in which you can be like a prophet or an apostle in your

daily life?

Act of Worship

Sing together one of the following, or similar: *God Has Chosen Me* (AOV 1:21); *God's Spirit is in my Heart*, (Sing to the Lord 75) *Song of the Body of Christ* (AOV 1:27)

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The theme of today's readings is Mission, the call and the sending out of us and others to witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ. Amos in the First Reading was a sheep farmer who felt that he was called by God to preach against the social injustice that was rife in the northern kingdom of Israel, and so he is found at the national temple in Bethel denouncing the government of the day. Prophets were expected to denounce the enemies of the nation, not the nations own rulers and so Amaziah, the priest at Bethel was asked to move Amos on. But unlike Amaziah, Amos had no position or status in the community to lose. Being a simple farmer it was difficult to pressure him into moving along and out of the way. So Amos continued to prophesy and be a prickle in their skin (or a pebble in the shoe). Continually he reminded them of their fate if they did not change from their unjust ways. Amos was the first of a series of strong charismatic prophets. He appeared from Judah, when Israel was expanding, prosperous and powerful. His words were not welcome.

In the Gospel we have the story of Jesus sending out the Apostles as his missionaries, telling them to travel light, they are not to be weighed down with possessions, nor should they take money. They were to have the freedom of Amos - the freedom of the unencumbered. They have to carry the missionary word of Jesus. That is enough. That is the only necessity they are to carry.

A Reflection on the Readings

The Apostles were not to rely on their own resources but on the authority that had been given them by God and the kindness of those they met on their way. It is the same for us. Being that vulnerable makes the message their real resource, they, like us and Amos, have to rely on the power and authority given to us.

You might help the children understand that when we are free of all our possessions then we are free to work for the Lord. Only then can we have our minds on the job of living the Christian life and bringing others to Christ. We have but to live simply, trust in Jesus and spread Jesus' message of the Good News. Ask the children if they think they could leave all their possessions, home and parents behind and follow Jesus. We are called to be Jesus to others. If we cannot imagine doing so now, it is something for us to grow towards, something to aim for as we grow more stronger and more mature within the sheltering embrace of our homes, families and friends.

The children might make a list of the things they cannot possibly live without. Such a list would be interesting for them to revisit in a year or two or three so ask them to put it somewhere, inside a favourite book perhaps, where they can find it in a couple of years time. They might be surprised at how what they thought was so vital to them

has faded to become less important or even to be of no importance at all. The children can also be encouraged to foster in themselves a spirit of independence of thought. We see a good example of it in the life of Amos as given to us in today's Liturgy of the Word. Independence and courage to stand up for injustice, to stand up for what we know to be right when everyone else seems to be giving in to what is popular or easy. Racial intolerance or abuse is a good example of a prevailing attitude within our community that needs everyone's attention. We have to be brave and stand up against racial abuse and intolerance. We have to turn our backs to criticism and speak out for what we know is right and just at all times.

As followers of Christ, carriers of Christ's message, we can pray together with the children for the courage and the strength to carry out our mission in the world, and to leave behind the things that don't matter.

PS Is it time to sort out the extra clothes and shoes/toys/storage cupboards etc and offer these goods to the local Hospice Shop or similar charity?

Notes

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, you call us to be your children and to look after others.
 Help us to show your love to those we live and play with. Amen

FIRST READING

Reader: Amos 7:7-15
 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

Reader: (if included) Ephesians 1:3-14
 The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

at the end of the Gospel:

Minister of the Word:

Mark 6:7-13

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
 Glory to you, Lord.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

(Refer to opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH**PRAYERS 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: Full of hope and faith and with the words of today's readings in our hearts let us call upon our loving God for our needs.

- For the Church, a mother to those without hope in their hearts.
 Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That the church will reach out to everyone. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That we, the children of Aotearoa New Zealand will take care of one another. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For the strength and courage to do what we know is right. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

Loving God you are the source of all our hope, gather those for whom we pray to you. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord and Shepherd.
 Amen

All:

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

Readings

Sixteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Green

In last week's Gospel, Jesus sent his apostles out on their mission to preach, cast out evil spirits and cure the sick. Their mission was a great success, but now after their return they are weary. Jesus is aware of their needs and insists they have a quiet place to rest. Perhaps this Gospel calls us to evaluate the balance in our lives between work and the need to take a break from the demands of life. Where does prayer fit into the pattern of our day?



First reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

I, the Lord, will bring the rest of my people back from the lands where I have scattered them. I will bring them home, and they will grow into a mighty nation. I will choose leaders who will take care of them. Every one of my people will be there, and they will never again be frightened or terrified. I, the Lord, have spoken! I promise that the time will come when I will choose a king from the family of David. He will be wise and will rule the land with justice and fairness. As long as he is king, Judah will be safe, and Israel will live in peace. The name of this king will be, "The Lord is our Protector!"

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 valley's as dark as death, but I won't be afraid.

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

Your kindness and love will always be with me, every day of my life,

And I will live forever in your house, O Lord.

Gospel

Mark 6: 30-34

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL OF MARK

After the apostles returned to Jesus, they told him everything they had done and taught. But so many people were coming and going that Jesus and the apostles did not even have a chance to eat.

Then Jesus said: "Let's go to a place where we can be alone and get some rest." They left in a boat for a place where they could be alone. But many people saw them leave and figured out where they were going. So people from every town ran ahead and got there first.

When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw the large crowd that was like sheep with out a shepherd. He felt sorry for the people and started teaching them many things.

The Gospel of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, picture of a flock of sheep OR a sign that says, “I am the Good Shepherd”

Images from the Readings

- Rest
- Large crowd
- Live in peace
- Sheep without a shepherd
- The Lord is our protector

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 their responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Have you ever felt like a sheep without a shepherd? A little lost or unsure about what to do next or which way to go?

In today’s Gospel, Jesus is spoken of as a shepherd who looks after his sheep. Can you remember any other Bible stories that describe Jesus as a Shepherd? (Jesus searches for the lost sheep) Why might a shepherd be a good image to use for Jesus? What sort of things does a shepherd do for sheep? What sort of things did Jesus do for his apostles? The people were described as sheep with out a shepherd. What did Jesus do for the people who followed them to the quiet place?

If you used the first reading, help the children to find the signs of God’s love for his people through the kind of leaders that he chooses to look after them. It is just that kind of leadership that we see in the way Jesus cared for the apostles and people.

Invite the children to list the people who care for them and teach them about God in our time and place – in what ways are they like the leaders God chooses? In what ways are they like Jesus who cared for his apostles and taught the people who followed him to a quiet place?

Why do you think Jesus wanted to find a quiet, peaceful spot? Do you ever have trouble finding some peace and quiet or getting away by yourself? Invite the children to share some of their quiet places where they rest and pray.

Act of Worship

Invite the children to enter into a quiet place in their hearts. (pause) Invite them to listen to the words of Psalm 23 while you read it and create in their hearts and minds a picture of the quiet peaceful place that the psalm describes. (pause) At the end of the psalm, invite them to stay quiet a little longer and imagine Jesus coming to meet them in this quiet place. (pause) After some moments, ask: What is Jesus saying to you? Then a little later: What do you want to say to Jesus? (long pause) When it is time to end the prayer, invite the children to say thank you to Jesus for caring for them and gently bring their attention back to the place where you are gathered.

You may wish to remind the children that they can use this way of going into their heart room whenever they need a quiet place to be with Jesus.

Background to the Readings

Today’s Readings all focus on the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd - calling all people of whatever race or belief to lead them to God. In Israel the idea of shepherd and ruler, king and shepherd, were often related as the shepherd bore responsibility for the needs of his flock so the king bore responsibility for the needs of the people. Jeremiah is writing in the last years of King Zedekiah, just before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587BC. He attacks the shepherds, the last kings of Judah, who have mislead their flock by turning them away from God and scattering them. As the people are about to be dispersed into exile the Lord promises to bring them back and to give them good and faithful rulers. The first sentence of today’s Gospel links it with that of last week when the twelve were sent out on their mission. Jesus is now responding to their tiredness and need for a break. They set off for a lonely place, only to find it crowded. How often that happens for people in caring and protective roles! Stories like this one in Jesus’ ministry reassure us that God never turns any of us away. This reality also needs to be balanced with the need to “care for ourselves as caregivers”. Burnout is no fun and no help to ourselves or others, what ever our ministry may be!

Reflection for Leaders

In today’s Gospel Jesus shows the apostles the extent of their ministry to people. They too are shepherds of the flock, feeding and protecting them, reassuring them of Jesus’ continued presence through word and deed. Jesus demonstrates the truth of his teaching “Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find.”

God’s loving care for everyone is expressed in the picture of the good shepherd. Jesus’ life is to be taken by his followers as an example to them. The feeding of the hungry, the spreading of the gospel to those who are without hope and care for those who search and hunger for God is to be their first concern. Jesus draws people to himself like a magnet. Everyone who hears of him is drawn to him. Why did Jesus want to find a quiet, peaceful spot? Do you ever have trouble finding some peace and quiet or getting away by yourself? What do you do?

The promise God makes through Jeremiah his prophet to the people is for a gentle leader one who will guide and shepherd them. When Jesus comes he is just such a shepherd but he is a shepherd for the poor, the lost and the outcasts. Are the qualities that Jeremiah promised for the Messiah the same qualities that we find in Jesus of the Gospels? Are these the same qualities that we ourselves are to strive for? Have we been called to be shepherds of God's people?

The children relate well to the caring qualities of God. They see people in our own community whose vocation it is to care for and nurture others and often these very people are the ones children are in daily contact with. School teachers, nurses, loving parents, and grand parents who put the welfare and well-being of others before themselves. The children may already be able to identify brothers or sisters, class leaders, monitors or team leaders of their own age or a little older who already show signs of these caring qualities. All these people give children a taste and a feeling for a caring God who looks after his people like the shepherds of old who cared for their sheep to the extent of being willing to lay down their lives for them if the need arose. Who provides this example for you? Who looks to you as an example of God's loving care and protection?

Notes

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, you sent Jesus into the world that we might know how to live as you want us to live. Help us to always care for others as we would like them to care for us. Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader: Jeremiah 23:1-6
 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

Reader: (if included) Ephesians 2:13-22
 The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56
 A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
 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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 the readings we have heard today in our hearts let us call upon our loving God for our needs:

- For the Church, the place where all outsiders are welcomed, that everyone will be invited to come inside. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.
- For leaders with generous hearts to govern all people. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.
- For caring leaders to govern our own people of Aotearoa New Zealand. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will show kindness to the people we meet at school and in our family at home. Let us pray to the Lord.
 - Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

O God you care for your people hear the prayers we your children make to you through Jesus Christ our Lord.
 Amen.

All:

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

Readings

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green



When Jesus saw the need of the people and set out to give them food to eat, he was setting us an example to follow. This gospel story challenges us to respond to the stark reality of one person dying from hunger every 3.6 seconds. This gospel story is a story of abundance. There is more than enough food available to feed the world. What is needed is for more people to follow the example of the child in the story who gave Jesus the food he had to be shared with those in need.

Gospel

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Jesus crossed Lake Galilee, which was also known as Lake Tiberias. A large crowd had seen him work miracles to heal the sick, and those people were with him. It was almost time for the Jewish festival of Passover, and Jesus went up on a mountain with his disciples and sat down.

When Jesus saw the large crowd coming towards him, he asked Philip, "Where will we get enough food to feed all these people?" He said this to test Philip, since he already knew what he was going to do.

Philip answered, "Don't you know that it would take almost a year's wages just to buy only a little bread for each of these people?"

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the disciples. He spoke up and said, "There is a boy here who has five small loaves of barley bread and two fish. But what good is that with all these people?"

The ground was covered with grass, and Jesus told his disciples to have everyone sit down. About five thousand people were in the crowd.

Jesus took the bread in his hands and gave thanks to God. Then he passed the bread to the people, and he did the same with the fish, until everyone had plenty to eat. The people ate all they wanted, and Jesus told his disciples to gather up the leftovers, so that nothing would be wasted. The disciples gathered them up and filled twelve large baskets with what was left over from the five barley loaves.

After the people had seen Jesus work this miracle, they began saying, "This must be the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

Jesus realised that they would try to force him to be their king. So he went up on a mountain, where he could be alone.

The Gospel of the Lord

First Reading

A READING FROM THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

One day a man from the town of Baal Shalishah came with some food for Elisha. The man brought him twenty loaves of barley bread that had been made from the first crop of grain. He also brought some fresh heads of grain.

Elisha told his servant. "Let the people have it to eat." His servant replied, "This isn't enough to feed a hundred people." But Elisha told him, "Give the food to the people! The Lord has said that when they are through eating there will be some left over."

The servant gave them the food. And when they had finished eating there was some left over, just as the Lord had promised.

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.

Second Reading

Ephesians 4:1-6

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

Brothers and sisters: as a prisoner of the Lord, I beg you to live in a way that is worthy of the people God has chosen to be his own. Always be humble and gentle. Patiently put up with each other and love each other. Try your best to let God's Spirit keep your hearts united. Do this by living at peace.

All of you are part of the same body. There is only one Spirit of God, just as you were given one hope when you were chosen to be God's people.

We have only one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. There is one God who is Father of all people. Not only is God above all others, but he works by using all of us, and he lives in all of us.

The Word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a loaf of bread

Images from the Readings

- Already knew
- Nothing wasted
- Be alone
- Feed us 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 by building on to their responses; perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas. Does this story about Jesus remind you of anything from last week's story? (Jesus could see what the people and the apostles needed, Jesus took care of the people. Jesus wanted to take the disciples to a quiet place to be alone) What did Jesus see that the people needed? Who did he ask to help him meet the peoples' need? What did they find? What food did the boy share with Jesus? What did Jesus do with the food that the child offered him? Focus on the actions of Jesus in this story – he took the bread, gave thanks, and shared the bread with everyone – then he did the same with the fish. Ask the children to name another time when Jesus took bread, blessed it and shared it with everyone – (The story of the Last Supper) How do you think the people felt after eating such special food? What happened to the food that was left over? What did this miracle make the people want to do? What was Jesus' response?

Why do you think he wanted to be alone?

The reading from the book of Kings where Elisha feeds a hundred people with a loaf of bread prefigures Jesus feeding the people in today's gospel story. Together, these stories prefigure the feeding of the Last Supper and the Eucharist. We are part of that same blessing, breaking and giving out which Jesus began over two thousand years ago. It's a record breaking meal!

Can you think of some ways that we can remember how valuable food is for our health and well being? Can you think of some good ways that we can be like Elisha and Jesus and share food with those who are hungry?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to share any prayer that they know can be prayed before we eat. Finish with the following prayer:

Loving Father, thank you for feeding us with food for our bodies and our souls, to make us strong so we can live good, loving lives. Amen

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The First Reading is a short story taken from a collection of stories about Elisha nearly all showing him as a wonder worker. The story in the First Reading is reflected in the Gospel and both stories follow a similar pattern:

Food is brought to the man of God.

The amount of food is specified.

Someone objects that the quantity is inadequate.

The man of God commands that it be distributed.

There is enough to eat and some left over.

As a Palestinian Jew, Jesus was brought up in a religion which hallowed everyday things. Food was a holy thing. The law required people to say a prayer of thanks every time they had eaten.

According to the author of John's gospel, this story takes place around the time of Passover. The Passover recalled the feeding of the nation with manna in the desert, one of the expectations of the coming messiah is that he would feed the people as Moses had done. When the people try to make Jesus into the king they expect and want he flees into the hills. The temptation and the opportunity are there to exercise the fragile power and authority of earthly kingship and Jesus avoids it and heads for the hills. The wilderness setting is the place he returns to, the familiar ground on which previously he had fought temptation and won, alone with God.

We begin this week to read the Gospel of John and for this and the next four Sundays we read from it, and study and reflect on what it is that we do when we stand at the table of the Lord, take bread, break it and distribute it week after week.

The Second Reading, originally part of a homily to the newly baptised, encourages them and us to be steadfast in hope and love and to be united to one another as God is one.

Reflection for Leaders

God provides the basic needs of human life. In today's Readings these needs are supplied in the form of food - an essential ingredient for human survival. What we and the disciples of Jesus at that time need to learn is that Jesus is not only resourceful, he himself is the resource.

The lesson is that God is the source of all and will supply all we require; God provides. Even in times and places where it doesn't seem possible, God provides. God provides for the needy abundantly, even to the point of over-abundance. This lesson is summed up in the Response to the Psalm

"The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs"

Jesus feeds the people and the people are still hungry and follow him for more of what he has to offer them. We see Jesus' power over nature illustrated in today's

reading, when he multiplies loaves and fishes. We remember how he once walked on water and how he calmed the storm. Even today these deeds make us cry out in wonder as we look out for the hand of God in the world around us.

The acts of providence performed by both Elisha and Jesus the Messiah in taking bread, giving thanks, and distributing it to those in need, remind us that we too perform this act through God's saving love each Sunday when we gather to give thanks and remember.

There is a challenge here for us too. Only when we share the little we think we have, will we discover how much we have left over. The exhorting words of Paul are also to be remembered as we prepare what we want the children to take from these readings. We are one as Christ and the One who sent him are one. We are one in faith, hope and love.

The children might enjoy the simple act of going over the *actions* described in today's reading from John's Gospel. Talk about food; bread in particular - how it builds up our body and how spiritual food strengthens our spirit and makes us one with each other through Christ. Leaders could bring some bread that could be blessed broken and distributed to the children. The idea of everyone sharing the same loaf can be discussed. We are each part of the Church which comes together on Sundays to celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ, this is what binds us together as one people, this bread that we share and eat.

Notes

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, knowing your love for us, we try to live as we should.
Help us to care for other people as you care for us. Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader: 2 Kings 4:42-44
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

Reader: (if included) Ephesians 4:1-6
The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

□ 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 previous page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH**PRAYERS 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 call upon our loving God for our needs:

- For the Church throughout the world that it will reach out with compassion to all people who suffer. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- That there will be food for the hungry. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- For lawbreakers. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.
- For those in prison. Let us pray to the Lord. □ Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

God of all, hear the prayers 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

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

After the Israelites had fled from Egypt into the desert, God took care of his people and made sure that they did not go hungry. Jesus tells us it is his life within us that is the food that keeps us going.



First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF EXODUS

After the people of Israel had escaped from Egypt and were in the desert, they all started complaining to Moses and Aaron.

They said, "We wish the Lord had killed us in Egypt. When we lived there, we could at least sit down and eat all the bread and meat we wanted. But you have brought us out here in the desert, where we are going to starve to death."

The Lord said to Moses:

"I will send bread down from heaven like rain for all of you. Each day the people can go out and gather up only enough for that day. By doing this, I'll find out if they will obey me.

I have heard my people complain. Now tell them that each evening they will have meat, and each morning they will have more than enough bread. The people will know that I am the Lord their God."

That evening birds came and landed everywhere in the camp. The next morning dew covered the ground. After the dew had gone, there were thin flakes that looked like frost all over the ground. The people had never seen anything like this, and they started asking each other, "What is it?"

Moses told them, "This is the food that the Lord has given you."

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 78

Response:

The Lord gave them bread from heaven.

These are things we learned from our ancestors, and we won't keep secret the glorious deeds and the mighty miracles of the Lord.

John 6:24-29

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

The people saw that Jesus and his disciples had left. Then they got into the boats and went to Capernaum to look for Jesus.

They found him on the west side of the lake and asked, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

Jesus answered, "I tell you for certain that you are not looking for me because you saw the miracles, but because you ate all the food you wanted.

Don't work for food that spoils. Work for food that gives eternal life. The Son of Man will give you this food, because God the Father has given him the right to do so."

"What exactly does God want us to do?" the people asked.

Jesus answered, "God wants you to have faith in the one he sent."

The Gospel of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle, a bread roll

Images from the Readings

- Food that lasts
- Bread from heaven
- I am the bread of life
- Never hunger, never thirst

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.

What were the Israelites complaining about to Moses? How did God respond?

Ask the children if they have ever felt hungry and then smelt fresh bread.

Why do you think Jesus calls himself “bread”?

Jesus knows that the bread we eat each day is important to keep us strong and healthy, but he tells the people that he is offering much more than ordinary bread. He is offering them himself – the Bread of Life. There are more kinds of hunger than just hunger for food. Can you think of other ways we can be hungry?

What does the expression ‘food for thought’ mean?

Jesus knows that we need to have his life within us so that we can be truly happy.

Try to get the children to understand that when we receive Jesus in the Eucharist we are nourished and given the strength to follow him and live as he lives. Although it looks and tastes and is bread, it is also our spiritual food, the body of Christ.

Act of Worship

Use the bread as a focus for prayer. Sing a Eucharistic hymn and ask the children to pray for each other that we will recognise the real food that Jesus offers us.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The Israelites are tempted to make a return to Egypt when hunger forces them to focus on their stomachs – suddenly slavery with good food looks more attractive to them than freedom on a starvation diet. In the same way the people in the Gospel who track Jesus down after being fed on bread and fish till they have had their fill, are looking for physical satisfaction.

The word ‘Rabbi’ in Hebrew means, ‘my great one’. At the time of Jesus it referred to masters or teachers who had a following of disciples who learned from them. There is some debate about the meaning of the term ‘the Son of Man’ and whether Jesus used this title of himself or whether his disciples used it of him after his death. In the Book of Daniel, it is used as a term for God’s final agent of salvation at the end times.

Reflection on the Readings for Leaders

The people in the desert were concerned about their physical wellbeing, God answered their cries for help, but there is an underlying message – “Believe. Trust in me. Have faith. Stop worrying about yourselves all the time.” In the Gospel this message is echoed by Jesus to the crowds who have followed him. Jesus’ life within us is the food that keeps us going. Jesus asks that we stay hungry for the bread all our lives and that we bring others to the table to share with us in the supper of the Lord.

What associations, responses, hungers does bread evoke in us? What does it symbolise? Why is food such a powerful sign of dependence on God?

The God who watches over Israel in the desert is the same God who sends Jesus as a source of life into our lives.

What must you do to do the work that God wants?

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, help us, your children, to come to you so that we will never thirst or be hungry. Amen

FIRST READING

Reader Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Rx Psalm 77
 The Lord gave them bread from heaven
(or another suitable response known by the children)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

John 6:24-35

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 faith and love, let us pray to our loving God for our needs:

- For the Church that provides for the needs of all people.
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For spiritual food to feed those who are without hope.
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For leaders in Aotearoa-New Zealand, who put the needs of others before their own. Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will not hurt others by our selfishness.
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Loving God be gracious and hear the prayers that we, your children, make to you, we pray through Jesus Christ, our Lord
 All: Amen

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

Notes

Readings

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

Over the past two weeks we have heard how God feeds his people and takes care of their needs. Today we listen to a story about the prophet Elijah, who lay weak with hunger, feeling totally hopeless until God saved him. Jesus says "I am the living bread come down from heaven."



First Reading

A READING FROM THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

Elijah walked through the desert for a whole day. Finally, he came to a large bush and sat in its shade. Then he prayed to die. "Lord," he said, "I have had all I can take. Let me die! I'm no better than my ancestors." After saying this, he lay in the shade of the bush and fell asleep.

Suddenly an angel touched Elijah and said, "Get up and eat!" Elijah looked around, and by his head was a jar of water and some bread that had been baked over coals. After eating and drinking, he lay back down.

Soon the Lord's angel came back and touched Elijah again. This time the angel said, "Get up and eat, or else the trip will be too hard for you."

The food gave Elijah strength, and he travelled for forty more days until he reached Mount Sinai, the mountain of God.

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Response:

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord

Psalm 34

I will always praise the Lord. With all my heart

I will praise the Lord. Let all who are helpless listen and be glad.

Honour the Lord with me! Celebrate his great name.

I asked the Lord for help, and he saved me from all my fears.

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.

Second Reading

Ephesians 4:31-5:2

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

Brothers and sisters: Stop being bitter and angry and mad at others. Don't yell at one another or curse each other or ever be rude. Instead, be kind and merciful, and forgive others, just as God forgave you because of Christ.

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.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel

John 6:48-51

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Jesus said to the crowd:

"I am the bread that gives life!

Your ancestors ate manna in the desert, and later they died.

But the bread from heaven has come down, so that no one who eats it will ever die.

I am that 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."

The Gospel of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle, a plate with bread on it, and an image of Jesus

Images from the Readings

- I am the bread that gives life
- Manna in the desert
- Bread from heaven
- I give to the people of this world
- Taste and see the goodness of God

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.

How do you get to know someone new? (be introduced by someone else, spend time with them listening to them etc)

God wants us to know him and that is why he sent Jesus to us. We know something of what God is like because we know what Jesus is like.

In the first reading, Elijah was feeling that he had failed to bring the Chosen people back to God. He was feeling down and lost – as if he wanted to stop trying and just give up. Do you ever feel like giving up if you keep losing? Maybe you have failed at something that you have tried, or your sports team loses its match. How does it feel?

God was very gentle with Elijah when he felt like that.

Jesus tells us that we know God through him and that he is always with us, especially in the Bread of Life that we receive in the Eucharist.

Ask the children to express their experiences of God's love in their lives and their initiation into the Church. They will have some understanding of Eucharist and what it is to change and grow, of the effect food has on the body. Explain that when we receive Jesus in the Eucharist we are nourished and given the strength to follow him and live as he lives. It is our spiritual food, that makes us grow towards a greater understanding of God and our relationship with him and other people.

Act of Worship

Use the bread again as a focus for prayer. Sing "Taste and See" or recite the Psalm together, and then offer each other a sign of peace.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

Having defeated the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah earned the wrath of the pagan queen Jezebel, fleeing for his life into the Negeb desert he becomes disheartened. He breaks down and asks God to take his life, then lying down he goes to sleep. His plight mirrors that of Moses before him and Jeremiah who is to follow. Or even that of Jesus himself in Gethsemane. The forty days of Elijah's journey to Mt Horeb remind us of the forty years the Israelites spent wandering in the desert fed by manna. Of the forty days spent by Moses on Mt Sinai and of Jesus' fast in the desert where angels ministered to him after forty days.

The people were having great difficulty accepting Jesus' true identity and understanding the new reality that God's gift surpasses the Law and offers so much more – his flesh for the life of the world.

John's gospel contains several "I am" sayings, reflecting the revelation that God gave of himself to Moses when he called himself "I am who I am". Jesus' use of this term indicates his true identity as Son of God.

Reflection on the Readings for Leaders

The bread of life sustains and gives life, and it is also the presence of God in our midst. Elijah is given the food first to sustain him on his journey where he will meet God. Elijah needs new hope to carry on with his life as a man of God. Jesus is the bread of life sent by God. We need and receive renewed hope when we take part in the sharing of the bread broken and given, that becomes a spiritual food to sustain us. Is there a time when you were strengthened or nourished by another person? Jesus offers us a powerful gift. How can you share this gift with others?

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 want us to be your children, to be loving and kind. As we listen to the readings today, help us to hear your quiet voice in our hearts. Amen

FIRST READING

Reader

1 Kings 19:4-8
The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 34
Taste and see the goodness of the Lord
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader

(if included) Ephesians 4:30-5:2
The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

John 6:41-51

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: Full of the hope in the Gospel, let us call upon God for our needs:

- For the Church, mother of the lonely and the homeless, that our arms will be open to welcome those searching for hope
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For those who hunger for faith and hope
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we, the children of Aotearoa-New Zealand, will live lives that show love and respect for others
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will help those who are unhappy, feel left out or are not popular
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader:

Almighty God You give your children the riches of life, bless us and those for whom we pray through Jesus Christ, our Lord
Amen

All:

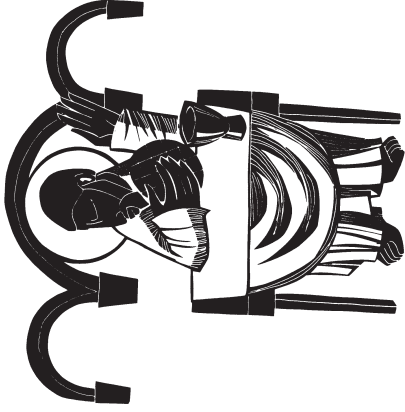
The children rejoin the assembly before the completion of the prayers over the gifts.

Notes

Readings

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green



Today Jesus tells the people that he is "The bread of life," and that anyone who eats this bread will live forever.

First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Wisdom has built her house with its seven columns. She has prepared the meat and set out the wine. Her feast is ready.

She has sent her servant women to announce her invitation from the highest hills. "Everyone who is ignorant or foolish is invited! All of you are welcome to my meat and wine. If you want to live, give up your foolishness and let understanding guide your steps."

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 34

Response:

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord

I will always praise the Lord. With all my heart, I will praise the Lord.
Let all who are helpless listen and be glad.

Honour the Lord! You are his special people. No one who honours the Lord will ever be in need. Young lions may go hungry or even starve, but if you trust the Lord, you will never miss out on anything good.

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 ate. They died, but whoever eats this bread will live forever."

The Gospel of the Lord

Second Reading

Ephesians 5:15-20

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

Brothers and sisters: Act like people with good sense and not like fools. These are evil times, so make every minute count.

Don't be stupid. Instead, find out what the Lord wants you to do. Don't destroy yourself by getting drunk, but let the Spirit fill your life.

When you meet together, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, as you praise the Lord with all your heart. Always use the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to thank God the Father for everything.

The Word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle, a plate with bread on it, and a glass of wine

Images from the Readings

- I am the bread from heaven
- You will have eternal life
- You are one with me and I am one with you
- Taste and see the goodness of God

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.

Do you ever have special meals with your family and friends? What were you celebrating?

What makes a meal special?

Can you think what a celebration might be like without being able to eat and drink together with the people we care about?

What we eat is important, but sharing and being together is often just as important.

Jesus also shared special meals with others. Can you think of when some of these may have been?

Jesus wants to be with us too and share his life with us. He does this in a special way through the Eucharist. He is present with us when we gather, in the person of the priest, in the story we hear and when we share the bread and wine.

When we share in his life, we are then sent out to be 'food' for others. How can we do this?

How are we able to see what other people need?

Act of Worship

Use the bread and wine as a focus for prayer. Make a circle around the focus, hold hands and pray for each other and our families.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The very strict dietary laws of Judaism – adhered to even today – precluded the eating of flesh with blood in it. This stems from the time of Noah, when God establishes his covenant, saying to Noah, “every living and crawling thing shall provide food for you, no less than the foliage of plants. I give you everything, with this exception: you must not eat flesh with life, that is to say blood, in it.” (Gen 9:3) The Hebrew word for ‘body’ means ‘person’, and ‘blood’ means ‘life’. The Jewish hearers remain at a physical understanding of what Jesus is explaining. But he insists that he makes God known because he comes from God.

Eating and drinking together is often used in scripture as symbolic of the sharing of life and love, therefore the sharing by the Christian community having the setting of a shared meal is also symbolic.

Reflection on the Readings for Leaders

Jesus offers himself totally – nothing held back – as the food that nourishes for life and beyond. The people to whom he speaks do not understand. When we share the “body of Christ” we share the Person, when we share the “blood of Christ” we share the life of Christ. We travel as did the chosen people of old, on a journey to the promised land, sustained by the food we find along the way. The Eucharist is our manna in the wilderness. Through it we receive a share in the life of God directly from the hand of God.

Sometimes it can be difficult for us to understand and accept the teachings of Jesus.

What do you draw life from? What is the source of your nourishment? What kind of life is Jesus offering you? Is it for now or the future? Are there ways you can bring life and nourishment to others this week?

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, when we listen to your Word we learn to love you. Help us to listen carefully with our ears, minds and hearts. Amen

FIRST READING

Reader Proverbs 9:1-6
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 33
 Taste and see the goodness of the Lord
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader *(if included)* Ephesians 5:15-20
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

Glory to you, Lord

John 6:51-58

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: Knowing that when we pray our prayers are heard, let us call upon God for our needs:

- For the Church, who like a mother reaches out for the homeless and welcomes the lonely. Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the peace that enables all people to be free to love one another. Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the people of Aotearoa-New Zealand will empty their hearts of anger and mistrust, and have faith and hope in each other. Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will show others by our love for one another how to live together in peace. Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Loving God, our maker and saviour, hear the prayers of your children. Through Jesus Christ our Lord
 Amen

All:

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

Notes

Readings

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

When Jesus had told the crowd that he was the living bread, many of them turned away and left because they did not believe in him.



First reading
A READING FROM THE BOOK OF JOSHUA
 Joshua brought together all the tribes of Israel and Shechem. Then he told their leaders, judges and officials to come into the presence of God.

Joshua told all of them what the God of Israel had said. He also told them, "If you don't want to serve the Lord, then today you must choose the god you will serve. You may choose the gods your ancestors worshipped on the other side of the river. Of you may choose one of the gods of the Amorites, since you are living in their land. But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord!"

The people answered, "We will never turn away from the Lord to serve other gods! It was the Lord who brought us and our ancestors out of the land of Egypt. And with our own eyes we saw the powerful miracles he performed to protect us during the time that we travelled through the nations. The Lord is our God, and we will serve him too!"

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Response:

Psalm 34

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord

Gospel

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Many of Jesus' disciples heard him speak about the bread of life and said, "This is too hard for anyone to understand."

Jesus knew that many of his disciples were grumbling. So he asked, "Does this bother you? What if you were to see the Son of Man go up to heaven where he came from?"

"The Spirit is the one who gives life! Human strength can do nothing. The words I have spoken to you are from that life-giving Spirit. But some of you refuse to have faith in me."

Jesus said this, because from the beginning he knew who would have faith in him. He also knew who would betray him.

Then Jesus said, "You cannot come to me unless the Father makes you want to come. That is why I have told these things to all of you."

Because of what Jesus said, many of his disciples turned their backs on him and stopped following him.

Jesus then asked his twelve disciples if they were going to leave him. Simon Peter answered, "Lord there is no one else we can go to! Your words give eternal life. We have faith in you, and we are sure that you are God's Holy One."

The Gospel of the Lord

I will always praise the Lord. With all my heart I will praise the Lord.
 Let all who are helpless listen and be glad.

When his people pray for help, he listens and he rescues them from their troubles.
 The Lord is there to rescue all who are discouraged and have given up hope.

The Lord's people may suffer a lot, but he will always bring them safely through. Not one of their bones will ever be broken.

Second Reading

Ephesians 6: 1-4

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

Children, you belong to the Lord, and you do the right thing when you obey your parents. The first commandment with a promise says, "Obey your father and your mother, and you will have a long and happy life." Parent don't be too hard on your children. Raise them properly. Teach them and instruct them about the Lord.

The Word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle, a signpost

Images from the Readings

- This is too hard for anyone to understand
- Does this bother you?
- The words are from the life-giving Spirit
- There is no one else that we can go to

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.

In today's Gospel Jesus has given the people a choice – even his disciples have to make a decision. Have you ever had to make a decision? Mostly your parents would make decisions for you, but sometimes you have your own choices to make at school and at home. Sometimes it can be very hard to choose. Sometimes it can help if we can use a signpost to help us see where we are heading.

Jesus told the people that choosing to follow him would sometimes be difficult and that he would help them.

What did the disciples decide to do?

Do you think that Jesus will help us to make difficult choices as well?

Each time we decide to do what is right rather than what we want to do, we make a choice to follow Jesus. It is okay if we sometimes don't understand what we should do, or if aren't sure that the choices we make are the right ones. Can you think of a time when you have found it hard to understand what Jesus said?

Act of Worship

Ask the children to say together the following prayer: "Jesus, we believe in you and choose to follow your way. Give us the bread of life to fill us with love and make our faith strong."

Background to the Readings

For the past weeks the revelation of Jesus as the one sent from God has been unfolding. Jesus has been assuring us that as his followers we may draw life from him by eating his flesh and drinking his blood. This teaching was not hard just for the Jews of that day to accept – people today still struggle with an understanding of this truth. Many of the disciples cease to follow him. Jesus then turns to his closest companions and offers them a choice – they may go or they may stay. Peter again is an example of leadership as he answers Jesus' choice on behalf of the whole group with his wonderful words of faith. In the same way Joshua sets out a choice for the people in the first reading. Joshua, as Moses' successor, is the one who led the people of God into the Promised Land. All the tribes are called together to hear his last farewell, as Joshua asks them to choose between the gods of the land they now inhabit or the God of their ancestors. It is decision time for the people then, just as for the disciples of Jesus' day.

Reflection on the Readings for Leaders

Jesus and Joshua gave their people a choice: the same choice that they each had been asked to make at the beginning of their ministry to the people of Israel. It is the choice that we also are each asked to make: a daily re-commitment to the will of God.

Past choices can become old and partially forgotten, or half-heartedly kept. They need to be revisited regularly to be revitalised. We need to keep on choosing Jesus, choosing to serve God for he is our God.

This freedom to choose is essential to the Christian message. What made you choose to follow Christ? What are the alternatives that the world offers, and how attractive are they? What are some of the significant choices that you have made in your life? How do you go about making these major decisions? Are there things that stop you believing in all that Jesus taught? What are the teachings of Jesus that you find most challenging?

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:

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 you love us and we try to love you. Guide us when we have to make choices and strengthen our trust in you.
 Amen

FIRST READING

Reader Joshua 24:1-2, 14-18
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 34
 Taste and see the goodness of the Lord
 (or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader (if included) Ephesians 5:21-32
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

John 6:60-69

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: Inspired by today's readings, let us call upon our loving God for our needs:

- For the Church, where the poor and broken-hearted find comfort
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For a spirit of hope to bring nations and peoples together
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That people of Aotearoa-New Zealand, who live outside the law will have a life-changing experience. Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

- For continuing, growing, strong faith in our parents, teachers and leaders
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader: Ever faithful God hear the prayers the children of your church make to you through Jesus Christ, our Lord
 All: Amen

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

Notes

Readings

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

The Pharisees and scribes had made many laws that were supposed to help the Jews obey God's law. After a time it became more important to obey their own laws than those of God. Today we hear how and why Jesus disobeyed one of these laws.



Gospel

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Mark 7: 1-5, 14-15, 21-23

Some Pharisees and several teachers of the Law of Moses from Jerusalem came and gathered around Jesus. They noticed that some of his disciples ate without first washing their hands.

The Pharisees and all other Jewish people obey the teachings of their ancestors. They always wash their hands in the proper way before eating. None of them will eat anything they buy in the market until it is washed. They also follow a lot of other teachings such as washing cups, pitchers and bowls.

The Pharisees and teachers asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples obey what our ancestors taught us to do? Why do they eat without washing their hands?" Jesus called the crowd together again and said,

"Pay attention and try to understand what I mean. The food you put into your mouth does not come out unclean and unfit to worship God. The bad words that come out of your mouth are what make you unclean."

"Out of your heart come evil thoughts, vulgar deeds, stealing, murder, unfaithfulness in marriage, greed, meanness, deceit, indecency, envy, insults, pride and foolishness. All these come from your heart, and they are what make you unfit to worship God."

The Gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Deuteronomy 4: 1-2, 6-8

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

Moses said: "People of Israel, listen carefully to the laws and commands that I am teaching you. If you obey them, you will live, and you will take the land that the Lord God of your ancestors is giving you. I am telling you what the Lord God has commanded. Don't add anything or take anything away."

"By faithfully obeying these commands, you will show other nations how wise and understanding you are. They will learn about these laws and say, 'This great nation is very wise and understanding.' "No other great nation has a god who is close enough to answer their prayers, as the Lord God does for us. And no other great nation has laws that are as fair as the ones I am giving you today."

The Word of the LordResponsorial Psalm
Response

Psalm 15

The just will live in the presence of the Lord

Only those who obey God and do as they should
Speak the truth and don't spread gossip.

They treat others fairly and don't say cruel things.
Those who do these things will always stand firm.

Second Reading

James 1:17 -18, 21b-22

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF PAUL TO JAMES

Brothers and sister: Every good and perfect gift comes down from the father who created all the lights of heavens. He is always the same and never makes dark shadows by changing. He wants us to be his own special people, and so he sent the true message to give us new birth.

Be humble and accept the message that is planted in you to save you.
Obey God's message! Don't fool yourselves by just listening to it.

The Word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle, a mask, a bowl of water with a sprig of greenery

Images from the Readings

- Unclean hands
- Obey the teachings
- Out of your heart come evil thoughts
- hypocrisy

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.

Why do we have a mask at our prayer focus today? People sometimes hide behind a mask so we can't see what they really think and mean. In today's Gospel we see that the Pharisees and teachers of the law noticed that Jesus and his disciples didn't always follow all the complicated rules and laws that had been made up. Jesus knew that the Pharisees and teachers of the law were saying one thing but doing something else. They had made the rules more important than love for others. Jesus was trying to make things easier for the people by looking at what was really important.

How do we know what is really important?

What are the things that bring us closer to God and other people?

What ways does God want us to behave?

Can we make a list of some of these things?

Is it ever right to break rules?

Rules and laws are very important in our lives. We have special rules at home and at school, we also live by special rules and laws of our country. In today's Gospel we see that the Pharisees and teachers of the law noticed that Jesus and his disciples didn't always follow all the complicated rules and laws that had been made up. Jesus knew that the Pharisees and teachers of the law were saying one thing but doing something else. They had made the rules more important than love for others. Jesus was trying to make things easier for the people by looking at what was really important.

Act of Worship

Invite the children to sing "Create in me a clean heart" or other appropriate song. Sprinkle the children with water to symbolise the cleansing of our thoughts and words and hearts.

Background to the Readings

The reading from the book of Deuteronomy describes a reformation of the faith of the Israelites which took place during the time of Joshua. The teaching here from Moses calls the people back to the original covenant. It relates to their lives at the time, emphasising that human traditions are not to be added to God's revelation. The law is presented not as a burden, but as a gift, as a source of life and wisdom and closeness to God. The laws governing washing probably originated in practices to ensure health and hygiene, but physical signs of impurity came to be seen as symbolic of a moral or spiritual imperfection. The complaint levelled against Jesus and his followers by the Pharisees is that of not observing the Jewish tradition of ceremonial washing, and thus allowing themselves to be numbered among the unclean. They were a group of especially observant Jesus, who took ritual observance very seriously. Jesus' words accuse them of being hypocrites – of presenting human observances as God's law, binding them to external practices. He wants to free people from the weight of stifling tradition that clogs up the heart and prevents proper worship of God.

Reflection on the Readings for Leaders

Jesus is only really interested in the stirrings of the human heart, the personal issues that preoccupy us and influence our choices and behaviour. No external law can change people's hearts. When our hearts are set on God they are freed from the multitude of human rules that tie us down, hinder a direct, personal relationship with God and prevent proper action and worship. What are some 'human regulations' in today's world that you find difficult to conform to? Why?

Are you in need of a change of heart? What might need to change in order to live the a Christian life more fully?

What might Jesus affirm in your own heart, and how might he challenge you to grow further?

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:

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, in the Readings you give us all we need to live. Help us to listen with our hearts, our minds and our ears, so that hearing your Word we will become your children. Amen

FIRST READING

Reader Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 15
 The just will live in the presence of the Lord
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader *(if included)* James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

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 great hope in our hearts, and knowing God sees that we are in need of help, let us pray to our loving God for our needs:
- For the Church, where the poor belong, that it will lead all people to make wise choices. Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
 - That people everywhere will have the opportunity and the resources needed for them to grow and learn. Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
 - That people of Aotearoa-New Zealand will put the care of other people before money. Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
 - That we will try to think about other's needs before our own
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- Leader: Loving God you provide for the poor and needy, hear the prayers we make to you through Jesus Christ, our Lord
 Amen
- All: Amen

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

Notes

Readings

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

Unless we know someone who is deaf, we take the gift of hearing for granted. We never stop to imagine how different our lives would be if we could not hear. Today we hear how one deaf man's world would never be the same again.

Responsorial Psalm
Response

Psalm 146

Praise the Lord my soul!

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.

He defends the rights of orphans and widows, but destroys the wicked.
The Lord God of Zion will rule forever!
Shout praises to the Lord!

Gospel

Mark 7: 31-37

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus left the region around Tyre and went by way of Sidon toward Lake Galilee. He went through the land near the ten cities known as Decapolis. Some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk. They begged Jesus just to touch him.

After Jesus had taken him aside from the crowd, he stuck his fingers in the man's ears. Then he spit and put it on the man's tongue. Jesus looked up toward heaven, and with a groan he said, "Effatha!" which means "Open up!" At once the man could hear, and he had no more trouble talking clearly. Jesus told the people not to say anything about what he had done. But the more he told them, the more they talked about it. They were completely amazed and said, "everything he does is good! He even heals people who cannot hear or talk."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Second Reading

James 2:1-5

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF JAMES

My friends, if you have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, you won't treat some people as better than others. Suppose a rich person wearing fancy clothes and a gold ring comes to one of your meetings. And suppose a poor person dressed in worn out clothes also comes.

You must not give the best seat to the one in fancy clothes and tell the one who is poor to stand at the side or sit on the floor. That is the same as saying that some people are better than others, and you would be acting like a crooked judge. My dear friends, pay attention. God has given a lot of faith to the poor people in this world. He also promised them a share in his kingdom that he will give to everyone who loves him.

The Word of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle,

Images from the Readings

- They begged Jesus just to touch him
- Jesus chose to heal through gestures and actions
- Jesus' compassion for the deaf man
- "Everything he does is good!"

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.

Have you ever sat really quietly and listened to the sounds around you? Perhaps we could do this now. (silence)

What can you hear? What things would you not be able to do if you were deaf or could not hear properly?

Would you be able to speak properly?

How do deaf people 'speak' to each other if they can't talk? (sign language and gestures)

Who asked Jesus to cure the deaf man?

How did Jesus heal the man? Why did he choose to touch him and not just say "Be healed"?

What do you think the man's first words might be after Jesus cured him?

While today's Gospel is speaking about a man who is physically deaf, lead the children to see that there are also other forms of deafness that we all participate in.

We can refuse to listen to others; others can refuse to listen to us, or we can refuse to listen to what Jesus wants us to do.

Act of Worship

Invite the children to use the words of the gospel, but addressed directly to Jesus ("Everything you do is good!") as a response to a simple litany of praise, such as:

Praise you Jesus, You are the healer *R. Everything you do is good!*

Praise you Jesus, You are the Son of God *R*

Praise you Jesus, You are the holy and anointed One *R*

Praise you Jesus, You are the Prince of Peace ... *R*

Praise you Jesus, You show us God's love and mercy *R*

Background to the Readings

The poem in the first reading belongs to the time when Israel was in exile in Babylon. It promises restoration, and encourages those who are losing heart. The image of the blind seeing and the deaf hearing is a sign of the fulfilment of God's promise of freedom for the oppressed.

In the Gospel today, physical deafness is a symbol of being closed off from the community. The deaf man's friends bring him to Jesus, who chooses to heal sacramentally (through gesture, touch, word and even spittle as signs which effect a cure) rather than just with a simple word. The cure opens the man to a whole new way of living but also new demands – no longer will he be able to be totally dependent on his family; now he must take up his own place in the community. As the healing takes place outside the borders of Israel in a non-Jewish district, we can assume that the deaf man was a Gentile, which indicates that God's mercy and compassion extends to all with no conditions or strings attached.

Reflection on the Readings for Leaders

Today's Gospel story is a miracle of liberation as one man is set free to hear and proclaim the mercy of God. Jesus' mission is to be of service to all, the handicapped and disabled he welcomes – no one is rejected because of their difference. We are encouraged to be open to the influence and needs of all as well – there is no place for prejudice. We must take people as we find them, God's people, and God has touched each one.

There are other forms of deafness; we can refuse to listen to what Jesus wants us to hear; we can be so tied up in our own world and how busy we are, that we can neglect to hear what people say to us. Is Jesus calling us to bless others with our full attention? What new possibilities might open up to us as we meet and hear the words Jesus has for us? What comfortable aspects of our life might we need to relinquish, or what new demands might be made on us?

Spend time this week being attentive to the way we use gestures and touch – either to include or exclude others.

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, you sent Jesus to lead us to you.
 We are slow to understand. Help us to know you better and live our lives to help others. Amen

FIRST READING

Reader Isaiah 35:4-7
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 145
 Praise the Lord, my soul!
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader *(if included)* James 2:1-5
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 7:31 -37

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark
 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 joyful hearts, let us pray to our loving God for our needs:

- For the Church, where the sick and isolated belong
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That people who suffer will be healed and will find peace
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That people of Aotearoa-New Zealand will look, reach out and care for others
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we will learn to trust each other
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader:

God of mercy and love, your loving kindness knows no end. 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.

Notes

Readings

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

Today we hear Jesus asking his followers a difficult question: "Who do you think I am?" Listen carefully, and see which disciple gave the right answer.



First Reading

Isaiah 50:4-8a

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

The Lord All-Powerful gives me just the right words to comfort the weary. Each morning he makes me eager to learn his teaching.

The Lord All-Powerful made me willing to listen and not rebel or run away. And so, I let them beat my back and pull out my beard. I didn't turn aside when they made fun of me and spit in my face.

But the Lord God keeps me from being embarrassed. And I refuse to give up, because I know I will never be ashamed. My Protector is nearby. No one can stand here and accuse me of any wrong.

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Response

Psalms 116

I will walk in the presence of the Lord.

I love you, Lord! You answered my prayers.

You paid attention to me, and so I will pray to you as long as I live.

You are kind, Lord, and good and merciful.

You protect ordinary people, and when I was helpless, you saved me.

You, Lord, have saved my life from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

Now I will walk at your side in this land of the living.

Second Reading

James 2:14-18

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF JAMES

My friends, what good is it to say you have faith, when you don't do anything to show that you really do have faith? Can that kind of faith save you?

If you know someone who doesn't have any clothes or food, you shouldn't say, "I hope all goes well for you. I hope you will be warm and have plenty to eat."

What good is it to say this, unless you do something to help? Faith that doesn't lead us to do good deeds is all alone and dead!

Suppose someone disagrees and says, "It is possible to have faith without doing kind deeds."

I would answer, "Prove that you have faith without doing kind deeds, and I will prove that I have faith by doing them."

The Word of the Lord

Gospel

Mark 8:31-35

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus began telling his disciples what would happen to him. He said, "The nation's leaders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law of Moses will make the Son of Man suffer terribly. He will be rejected and killed, but three days later he will rise to life."

Then Jesus explained clearly what he meant.

Peter took Jesus aside and told him to stop talking like that. But when Jesus turned and saw the disciples, he corrected Peter. He said to him, "Satan, get away from me! You are thinking like everyone else and not like God."

Jesus then told the crowd and the disciples to come closer, and he said:

"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 and for the good news, you will save it."

The Gospel of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle, a beautiful cross

Images from the Readings

- eager to learn
- doing kind deeds
- take up your cross and follow me

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? (While everyone listens each child is given the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God.)
When each has had an opportunity to speak you might begin general discussion by building on to their responses.
(One way of expanding on the responses of the children is to use questions which can be prepared beforehand. Some ideas for questions and a reflection are included above.)

Some things that we do we find hard. It is not always easy to do as our parents or teachers tell us.

Ask the children to name some of the things that they find difficult to do. (Going to the doctor, learning to swim, meeting new adults). List these and ask the children how they feel when they have to do something difficult. Ask them what helps them to do this difficult thing? (Mum comes with me, I get a reward for being brave, I pray for Jesus to be with me). How do you feel when that difficult thing is over and done with? (proud, brave, glad).

We are happy to be followers of Jesus. Just as a lamb follows the shepherd we know that we are safe when following the ways of our Lord. In the First Reading what does Isaiah say about what God has done for him? What has God given him strength to do? What has God done for you? In the Gospel what did Jesus ask his disciples? What is Jesus' message to those who follow him? What can we expect if we decide to follow Jesus? In your life now what good action do you find hard to do? What does Jesus mean when he says if you want to be my follower, take up your cross and follow me? Help the children to understand that "taking up your cross" and following Jesus means to live and love as Jesus did. Encourage the children to share how they might do this.

Act of Worship

Sing the acclamation: *Lord by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free. You are the Saviour of the World.*

Background to the Readings

The people have been asking who Jesus is and there have been lots of rumours flying about regarding him and his background including those that say he is out of his mind and in league with the devil. Jesus challenges the disciples asking them who they say he is and Peter answers on their behalf. "You are the Christ" But the idea that Peter and the other disciples have of the Messiah is different from that of the Suffering Servant which is the role of the redeeming Jesus. So Jesus has to take Peter back from his self assumed position as defender of that notion, bring him back to reality with a jolt "Get behind me, Satan!" - there is a message here for the others as well.

Reflection for Leaders

There is a message here for us all, not to let the stumbling blocks of our everyday lives get in the way of our journey to God. We do say "yes" with Peter and the others: "You are the Christ" and hosanna and hooray! but when the going gets tough and we are called upon to be suffering servants in our turn aren't we like Peter then too, don't we begin then to draw the line and say, that is not what I meant, this is not it at all, this is not for me at all, this is where I jump off, I draw the line here. Not if we are followers of the true Messiah, Jesus Christ who died for us on a cross, Jesus who said "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine let them take their cross and follow me." There is nothing in Jesus message about if it suits you or when you are ready or if its not too hard for you or only on Sundays or feast days. Now is the time, always is the time. Look at the cross of Jesus what does it teach us? If we are looking for a triumphant Christianity we must look closely at the way Jesus triumphed, look at the woman at the well story, the story of Martha's family, the story of Peter's life, in these stories and all the smaller stories surrounding the life of Jesus we discover Jesus' way "I am meek and humble of heart"
To accept the cross means to live as Jesus did. Jesus promised that those who do this will live forever.

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

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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 give us gifts and graces that we might serve you.
 We want to be followers of Jesus. Help us to learn to serve others too. Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 50:4-9
 Reader: The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 114
 I will walk in the presence of the Lord, in the land of the living.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

(if included) James 2:14-18
 Reader: The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 2:14-18

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
 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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 today's readings still in our hearts let us ask God for our needs:

- For the Church that guides and leads us. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- For peace in the world, an end to violence. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- That the people of Aotearoa New Zealand will live as one people.
 Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will try to see ourselves and each other as God sees us and be grateful for the skills and gifts each of us has been given. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.

Leader: Loving God, from you we receive life. Have mercy on 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.

Notes

Readings

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In accordance with the instructions in the "Directory for Masses with Children", and in keeping with the readings in the Lectionary for Masses with Children, this week's second reading replaces the first, which has been omitted.

Green

In today's gospel the disciples were arguing and fighting about who was the best and the most important. They were jealous of one another. It is OK to feel jealous – we all do that from time to time – but Jesus is warning us about how we behave or act when we are jealous.



Gospel

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus and his disciples went to his home in Capernaum. After they were inside the house, Jesus asked them, "What were you arguing about along the way?" They had been arguing about which one of them was the greatest, and so they did not answer.

After Jesus sat down and told the twelve disciples to gather around him, he said, "If you want the place of honour, you must become a slave and serve others!" Then Jesus had a child stand near him. He put his arm around the child and said, "When you welcome even a child because of me, you welcome me. And when you welcome me, you welcome the one who sent me."

The Gospel of the Lord.

First Reading

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF JAMES

Brothers and sisters:

The wisdom that comes from above leads us to be pure, friendly, gentle, sensible, kind, helpful, genuine, and sincere. When peacemakers plant seeds of peace, they will harvest justice.

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Response

Psalm 122

Give peace O Lord, to those who wait for you.

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.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle,

Images from the Readings

- What were you arguing about?
- Being the greatest
- Becoming a slave and serving others
- Welcoming/being a child
- Trusting God

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.

Have you ever had an argument? What are arguments usually about?

How do you feel when you see that someone else is behaving as they should and you are not? What do you do about it?

Why did the disciples not want to answer when Jesus asked them what they were arguing about? What was his advice to them when they were arguing?

What did Jesus mean when he said, "If you want the place of honour, you must become a slave and serve others." ?

Do you ever think you are better than somebody else, or perhaps argue with someone as to which of you is better at doing something?

Direct the discussion to acknowledge those who are in authority in the children's lives, and those who 'serve' them – are these sometimes the same people?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to name one person who is in authority in their lives. Pray for these people.

Sing "The Servant Song" together.

Background to the Readings

The wisdom that comes from above is now seen through the Christian perspective. The virtues of kindness, love and consideration are set over against greed in all its manifestations. The Gospel reading takes place directly after the transfiguration, as Jesus and the disciples were 'coming back to the realities of life'.

This passage contains a specific reference to the coming passion of Jesus Christ, where Jesus is teaching his disciples about his death and resurrection. This is sometimes referred to as the Paschal mystery. Pasch is derived from the Hebrew word *pesach* meaning to 'pass over'.

Jesus reinforces his words about being least of all by sitting down, assuming a position beneath his disciples, and putting a child before them. In the ancient world, a teacher's head was customarily never lower than his disciple's heads, and children were entirely without status.

Reflection on the Readings for Leaders

While this Gospel predicts the passion and death of Jesus, there are a number of other themes involved – one of which is the message that special hospitality should be offered to those from whom we can benefit the least. The trust that Jesus places in God he compares to the trust of a little child. Jesus uses the opportunity of the discussion over who is the greatest to teach the disciples what the ideal of "first place" must be in the Church community which they will become once he is no longer with them. Our faith should make a difference in the way we treat others. Jesus draws on the simplicity and humility of the child as a model for us.

If you consider one or two of the 'great' people you know, how could they be described as servants?

What is it about children that leads Jesus to make acceptance of them a test of the disciples' attitude to him?

Are there things that I do not understand and am afraid to ask?

What are my ambitions? Is service of others among them?

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:

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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 have made us to help one another
 Help us to serve those we live with -
 Our families and our classmates at school.
 Amen

FIRST READING

Reader James 3:16 – 4:3
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 54
 The Lord upholds my life
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(not included this week – see notes for leaders)*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 9:30-37

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark
 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 God for our needs:

- For leaders in the Church who will be the servants of all people
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the spirit of service will grow in all people around the world
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we learn to serve those we live beside in our daily lives, with a good attitude
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For peace in our hearts and our homes
 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.

Notes

Readings

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

Jesus places great importance on people giving good example and following others good example. Jesus also wants us to learn to be tolerant of both our own and other people's faults and their gifts – that means celebrating their successes and forgiving their failings. Being tolerant can sometimes be tough.



First Reading

Numbers 11: 25-29

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

The Lord came down in a cloud and spoke with Moses. Then he took some of the Spirit's power that he had given to Moses, and he gave it to the seventy leaders. The men prophesied, but they did it only this one time.

Two of the leaders had stayed in camp and had not gone out to the sacred tent. They were Eldad and Medad. But the spirit also took control of the, and they prophesied. A young man went and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in camp."

Joshua, son of Nun, was still a boy when he first started helping Moses. Joshua was there at the time and said to him, "Master, make those men stop!"

Moses replied, "Are you saying this for my good? I wish the Lord would give his spirit to all people and let them become his prophets!"

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 was always kind.

Second Reading

James 5: 1-6

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF JAMES

Brothers and sisters: You rich people should cry and weep! Terrible things are going to happen to you. Your treasures have already rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your money has rusted, and the rust will be evidence against you, as it burns your body like fire.

Yet you keep on storing up wealth in these last days. You refused to pay the

people who worked in your fields, and now their unpaid wages are shouting out

against you. The Lord All-Powerful has surely heard the cries of the workers who

harvested your crops.

While here on earth, you have thought only of filling your own stomachs and having a good time. But now you are like fat cattle on their way to be butchered. You have

condemned and murdered innocent people, who couldn't even fight back.

The Word of the Lord.

Gospel

Mark 9:38-41

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

The disciple John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw a man using your name to force demons out of people. But he was not one of us, and we told him to stop."

Jesus said to his disciples: "Don't stop him! No one who works miracles in my name will soon turn and say something bad about me. Any one who is not against us is for us. And anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name, just because you belong to me, will surely be rewarded.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth (ordinary time), Lectionary, candle

Images from the Readings

- Stop
- Gives you a cup of water in my name
- The need to remove all that leads to sin
- Generosity of spirit
- Tolerance

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.

Have you ever felt jealous of someone else, maybe even complained to your parents about them? Maybe you feel that they think they are better than you?

Sometimes people only want to hear their own side of the story, and they think everyone else has got it wrong.

It can be easy to exclude others so that we can belong to the right group – how does it feel to be left out?

How do we know the difference between doing right and wrong?

Jesus wants us to learn to be tolerant of both other's faults and their gifts – that means celebrating their successes and forgiving their failings. Being tolerant can sometimes be tough.

(If using the full Gospel reading, it might pay to ensure the children understand Jesus' figure of speech regarding avoiding sin – it is like the saying "I'd give my right arm for..." Explain that Jesus means that we should concentrate on always doing what is right first)

Act of Worship

Invite the children to hold hands in a circle and pray the *Our Father* together.

Background to the Readings

The story of Moses in the first Reading concerns two elders who were outside the group of those especially chosen by Moses as leaders of the people. The point of the reading is found in Moses' reply to the annoyed chosen ones - he tells them that people have no control over the spirit of God, that it blows where it will and is not confined to those who have special office or responsibility. This lesson echoes again the truth that God's ways are not our ways.

In the Gospel, Jesus warns his disciples against becoming a closed, exclusive and narrow-minded group. Jesus rejects nothing and no-one who contributes to the well-being of humanity.

Jesus also warns against damaging the faith of others who believe in him, and in strong, figurative language, urges his disciples to rid themselves of anything that would lead to sin. In New Testament, the body is a common metaphor for the church, so these sayings of Jesus may have referred to the exclusion from the community of those who gave offence.

Reflection on the Readings for Leaders

One of the saddest facts of Christianity must surely be the divisions and in-fighting that occur between groups of differing Christian denominations or even groups within the same church. The Holy Spirit often works in and through people who are outside the expected. How open are we to others? Can you think of a time when you mistrusted or misjudged someone who was outside your group, or made efforts to welcome someone new and different?

Today is Jesus calling us to examine just how tolerant we are of others with a differing faith experience? How well do we reflect Jesus' generosity of spirit?

In what ways has God been at work in your life up to now? Which aspects of your life may need to be pruned in order that you can flourish in your faith and come closer to God?

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: Loving God, You have given us all we need to live.
 Help us to be thankful for what we have, and be generous and tolerant of others. Amen

FIRST READING

Numbers 11:25-29
 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

(if included) James 5:1-6
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

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 in our hearts let us ask God for our needs:

- For the Church, our guide and our strength
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That our communities will learn to welcome those who don't belong
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That we, the people of Aotearoa-New Zealand, will treat others with generosity and tolerance. Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For those who feel unloved and excluded
 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
 Amen

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

Notes

Readings

Twenty Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

The Readings today speak to us about God's commitment to human partnership and the welfare of all creation as well as Jesus' commitment to children, the model for all who belong to the kingdom of heaven. We are made in the image and likeness of God. How do we reflect this divine care for creation and our common humanity in the everyday moments of our lives?



First Reading

Genesis 2: 18-24

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS

The Lord God said, "It isn't good for Adam to be alone! I need to make the right kind of partner for him."

The Lord then took some earth and made all the animals and birds. He brought them to Adam to see what names he would give each of the. Adam named all of the tame animals and all of the birds and the wild animals. That's how they got their names. Not one of the animals was the right kind of partner for Adam. So the Lord God made him fall into a deep sleep, and he took out one of Adam's ribs. Then after closing Adam's side, the Lord made a woman out of the rib.

The Lord God brought her to Adam, and Adam shouted, "Now here is someone like me! She is part of my body, my own flesh and bones! She came from me, a man. So I will call her Woman!"

That's why a man will leave his father and mother. He marries a woman, and the two of them become like one person.

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 128

Response:

May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.

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.

Mark 10: 13-16

Gospel

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Some people brought their children to Jesus so that he could bless them by placing his hands on them. But the disciples told the people to stop bothering him.

When Jesus saw this, he became angry and said, "Let the children come to me! Don't try to stop them. People who are like these little children belong to the kingdom of God. I promise you that you cannot get into God's kingdom unless you accept it the way a child does."

The Jesus took the children in his arms and blessed them by placing his hands on them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

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.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle , pictures of our beautiful world, of animals, birds, people/children of all different nationalities.

Images from the Readings

- Right kind of partner
- Names
- Here is someone like me
- Let the children come to me
- Jesus took the children in his arms

Discussion Points

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

Using the pictures that you have placed on your focus, ask: What sort of God is pictured in the First Reading? (Try to get from the children the idea of a creator God.)

What things do you see in your everyday life that remind you of God?

What are Jesus' feelings about children? From what you heard in the Gospel, what does Jesus tell us about children?

What do you think it is that Jesus loves so much about little children?

What do you know about this word: commitment? What in your life are you committed to? When people ask you to be committed to what you are doing or to a group to which you belong what do they mean?

Do you know of any signs or symbols that people wear that tell you about their special commitment? (Try to get around to discussing wedding rings, silver or gold rings that mark a commitment, badges, dress that marks a commitment to a profession or occupation, uniform, some people wear a cross to show their commitment to Jesus.)

Commitment is one idea that flows out of today's readings.

When God made people, he gave us an important job to do. We are to look after this world – all the growing plants, animals, birds and the places where they live as carefully as possible. We are to look after one another, sharing the things we need to live well and healthily, taking care of one another, especially the children!

Are there any young people here who are ready to help God look after the world? That's good! Could we make a fresh start/ a new commitment today? How? Talk over their ideas and do your best to encourage them to put into practice the ideas that are practical. (Consider collecting litter, recycling newspapers, cans, bottles,

composting etc and affirming what the children participate in at home and school already.)

Act of Worship

Before beginning this prayer, invite the children to think of a friend who needs God's special help.

Creator God, thank you for this new day,
bless me,
and my family,
and my friends today,
especially who needs your help.

Help me to be kind today,
to learn my lessons well,
and to care for your creation.

May I be happy with friends who are happy,
and care for those who are troubled or sad,
that with your strength

I can serve you, my God,
all this day.

(from *Prayer Kids*, Rosemary and Peter Atkins)

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The scene of Jesus with the child shows us how far the disciples were from accepting the teachings of Jesus about welcoming children. To be able to welcome the kingdom of God as a child does is to recognise, despite human failure, the value of God's original design for woman and man. In the story from Genesis recounted in the First Reading, God created woman and man in a relationship with one another, it is a relationship and partnership that is to last until the last day; we are locked in partnership as co-inhabitants of God's creation. This co-habitation is a permanent relationship and interrelationship that each of us has to work at if it is going to be productive and flourish. This relationship needs commitment by all of us to make it work. The kind of commitment that Jesus had for the people of his time.

Reflection for Leaders

List in your mind all the qualities you think are important components of a commitment, qualities like honesty, trust, openness, dependability etc. God puts a seal on the sacredness of the union of woman and man, on partnership and the co-operative nature of the edict to "fill the earth and make it yours". This is a seal on the liaison between all women and all men - this is to be a co-operative endeavour. The blessed nature of humanity is emphasised in the story.

In the Gospel Jesus points to the example of children not because they are naive but

because they are more open to reality and to the workings of the spirit than adults. The Readings today speak to us about commitment to each other and to all people, commitment to the common humanity that binds us all to each other. The Readings speak of the major commitments we make to each other, marriage particularly, but also of Jesus' commitment to us (Second Reading) and to children (Gospel) and God's commitment to the welfare of creation (First Reading). Ask the children to list the things that make commitments strong. In the Readings the equality of the woman and the man is also stressed.

Notes

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 Lord, you made us to be your children. Help us to love and respect one another as part of your whole family, the Church.
 Amen.

FIRST READING Genesis 2:18-24
Reader: The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 127
 May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING *(if included)* Hebrews 2:5-12
Reader: The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sing)*
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

Mark 10:2-16

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
 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**PRAYERS 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 who created us and provides for our needs:

- For the church where the poor and the unhappy are welcome.
 Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For good and compassionate rulers who care for their people as a mother cares for her new child. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- That the love we have for each other will bind us together at all times.
 Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That the burden of sickness and suffering will be lifted from those who are suffering. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

Leader: Caring God our creator and our hope 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.

Readings

Twenty Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

Have you ever been on a treasure hunt? The Bible tells us that we are to seek for wisdom and understanding, to seek out the kingdom of God. This reminds me of a saying: Act as though it all depends on you, pray as though it all depends on God. God promises that if we seek him we will find him.



Gospel

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

(This Gospel reading offers an excellent opportunity to share the reading between the two characters, Jesus and the young man)

As Jesus was walking down a road, a man ran up to him. He knelt down, and asked, "Good teacher, what can I do to have eternal life?" Jesus replied, "Why do you call me good? Only God is good. You know the commandments. Do not murder. Be faithful in marriage. Do not tell lies about each others. Do not cheat. Respect your father and mother." The man answered, "Teacher I have obeyed all these commandments since I was a young man."

Jesus looked closely at the man. He liked him and said, "There's one thing you still need to do. Go sell everything you own. Give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven. Then come with me." When the man heard Jesus say this, he went away gloomy and sad because he was very rich.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "It's hard for the rich people to get into God's kingdom!" The disciples were shocked to hear this. So Jesus said to them again, "It's terribly hard to get into God's kingdom! In fact it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to get into God's kingdom." Jesus' disciples were even more amazed. They asked each other, "How can anyone ever be saved?"

Jesus looked at them and said, "There are some things that people cannot do, but God can do anything."

The Gospel of the Lord.

First Reading

Wisdom 7: 7-11

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF WISDOM

I prayed for understanding, and it was given to me. I asked God for Wisdom and it came to me.

I valued Wisdom more than power and kingdoms. Riches were nothing compared with Wisdom. I considered her more valuable than priceless jewels. Gold was nothing but sand, and silver was merely mud, when compared with Wisdom.

I loved her more than health and beauty. I preferred Wisdom to light, because she is much brighter. Wisdom has countless treasures, and everything is good because she is mine.

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 90

Response: **Fill us with your love O Lord, and we will sing for joy.**

Teach us to use wisely all the time we have.

When morning comes, let your love satisfy all our needs.

Then we can celebrate and be glad for what time we have left.

Do wonderful things for us, your servants,

And show your mighty power to our children.

Our Lord and our God, treat us with kindness and let all go well for us.

Second Reading

Hebrews 4: 12-13

A READING FROM THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

Brothers and sisters: What God has said is not only alive and active! It is sharper than any double edged sword. His spirit can cut through our spirits and our souls and through our joints and our marrow, until it discovers the desires and thoughts of our hearts.

Nothing is hidden from God!

He sees through everything, and we will have to tell him the truth

The Word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a treasure box filled with brightly coloured stones (treasure)

Images from the Readings

- Understanding
- Wisdom
- Countless treasures
- Nothing is hidden from God
- Go sell everything you own
- God can do anything

Discussion points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow the 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 participated in a treasure hunt? What did you have to do? How did you know where to hunt? Did you find the treasure? Was there enough treasure for everyone? The Bible tells us that we are to seek God as we live our lives. It's a bit like a treasure hunt. We seek or search for God by looking out for signs of his love. What might some of these signs be do you think? We might find God's love in helping someone, being friendly, enjoying God's beautiful world, being glad when someone helps us or listens to us when we are worried about something. There are lots of different ways we can find God's love.

Now, can you think of some things that might stop us from finding God's love? Sometimes we find it really difficult to share a precious toy or a favourite book or to stop playing when the bell rings or Mum calls us to do a job for her. How might we behave at times like that? Is it difficult or easy to find God's love in those sorts of moments?

Can you remember which person in our Gospel story today found it hard to share his precious treasures with other people? How do you think he was feeling at the beginning of that story? Why? How do you think he was feeling at the end of the story? What changed for him? What do you think he might have done next? (He might have tried to change things in his life) What do you think Jesus would say to him if he came back to Jesus after he changed things in his life? Can you help us to think of some ways we can get out of the difficult moments in our lives so we can set out on our treasure hunt to find God's love once again? (Saying sorry, letting go and sharing, listening to our teacher or our parents who are trying to help us be obedient, using the Sacrament of Reconciliation). What does it feel like when we have made that change? (as though we are filled with new life or have found a new treasure, or

relief that we can start again)

We are like the young man in the Gospel who was seeking God. Jesus helped him to see what he needed to change in his life. When we are seeking God, we must expect to see the same pattern in our lives too. What beautiful treasures we will find on the way!

Act of Worship

Ask the children to identify one way that they could be a treasure, in Jesus name, for someone in their lives. Help them to choose ideas that are simple, practical and real for their lives. Then give each child a treasure - one of the brightly coloured stones - to hold in their hands. Create a time of stillness and quiet, then ask the children to imagine Jesus standing before them, placing his hands over theirs so he can bless the treasure they hold in their hands. Let them take this treasure home so it can remind them of the promise they have made in Jesus name and the love he has given them to make it come true.

Background to the Readings

The background for the poem of the First Reading is in the Book of Solomon, also known as the Book of Wisdom. At the beginning of Solomon's reign God invites him to ask for whatever he wants and Solomon answers, "Give your servant an understanding heart, in order to govern your people and to discern between good and evil." The author of this book of Wisdom is on a quest for God. Such a search alters our whole outlook on life. This is no casual conversation but rather a deep heartfelt listening and questioning of our motives and reasons for what we do and the choices we make in the way we live our lives. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews has obviously experienced such a search and likens the power of the Word of God to a double edged sword. There is no hiding from God. However, once the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts are purified and we embrace the gifts of wisdom and understanding, God's power of transformation results in a whole new way of life - we have found the treasure, we have entered the kingdom!

Reflection for Leaders

Once again the readings focus on the choice between God and riches. It is not only riches in a material sense that we are called upon to clear away from between God's love and will for us and our own part in our agreement to live as children of God, but also things such as our time and patience or attachment to anything that might distract us from God's call to us. For God asks us where our heart truly resides. We are to beware of trying to fulfil desires and feed appetites that can never be satisfied in this world. Attachment to our possessions can lead to our being owned by them.

Jesus demands an inner independence. So that by being independent of what we have we can allow ourselves to be wholly dependent on God.

We are called to be conspicuous, to be recognisable by our relationship with God, each other and our neighbour. How hard it is to be conspicuous followers of Christ. What will others think we are about? Sometimes it is easier to focus on the exterior things- the accepted trappings of being Christian. -The pious private devotions, the weekly routine going to Mass. - These are the comfortable conventions that Wisdom warns us against. They would not be conspicuous enough for Christ, or Paul for that matter. These conventions do not speak of active burning concern for the welfare of others or highlight lives dedicated to the service of good. How can we encourage ourselves and the children to turn their attention from material possessions to the things of the heart?

Notes

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: Loving God, you created us to serve you and each other, and to be children of faith and hope; Help us to turn from our cares and worries and to listen to your voice in our hearts. Amen.

FIRST READING

Wisdom 7:7-11
 Reader: The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 89
 Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

(if included) Hebrews 4:12 -16
 Reader: The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 10:17-31

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
 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

PRAYERS 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 our needs:

- For the Church our home; and for strong women, men and children to lead the Church. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For food for the hungry, shelter for the homeless and care for the poor. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That the children of Aotearoa New Zealand will have respect for all people especially the elderly and the weak. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will follow Jesus' way. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

Leader: Saving God hear the prayers 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

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

Jesus' model for leadership is that of a Servant King. It is human nature to want to be important. We all enjoy being given exactly what we want. It is much easier to deal with "Yes" rather than "No" when we ask others to give us what we want. How practical is the model of servant leadership for the Church, for our lives? What difference might this model make if we really took it seriously?



First Reading Hebrews 4: 14-16

A READING FROM THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

Brothers and sisters: we have a great high priest, who has gone into heaven, and he is Jesus the Son of God. That is why we must hold on to what we have said about him.

Jesus understands every weakness of ours, because he was tempted in every way that we are. But he did not sin.

So whenever we are in need, we should come bravely before the throne of our merciful God. There we will be treated with undeserved kindness, and we will find help.

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.

Gospel

Mark 10 35-45

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and asked, "Teacher will you do us a favour?"

Jesus asked them what they wanted and they answered, "When you come into your glory, please let one of us sit at your right side and the other at your left."

Jesus told them, "You don't really know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the cup that I must soon drink from or be baptised as I must be baptised?"

"Yes we are!" James and John answered.

The Jesus replied, "You certainly will drink from the cup from which I must drink. And you will be baptised just as I must! But it not for me to say who will sit at my right side and my left. That is for God to decide."

When the other ten disciples heard this, they were angry with James and John.

But Jesus called the disciples together and said:

"You know that those foreigners who call themselves kings like to order people around. And their great leaders have full power over the people they rule. But don't act like them. If you want to be great, you must be the servant of all the others. And if you want to be first, you must be everyone's slave. The Son of Man did not come to be a slave master, but a slave who will give his life to rescue many people."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a dust pan and brush and a crown

Images from the Readings

- Jesus understands every weakness
- We will find help
- Will you do us a favour?
- Everyone's slave
- Give his life

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.

Refer to the dustpan and brush and the crown from the focus: Ask the children: What is a king? Which items would belong to a king? How would you speak to a king? What would you say if a king asked you to do him a favour? How would you behave in his presence? Why does a king have servants? What qualities would a servant want in their king?

Now ask: What is a servant? What sort of jobs would a servant do for a king? What qualities would a king want in his servants? Would you rather be a king or a servant?

Now Jesus is our king. It is true that he is very important and it is true that he is very powerful. However he is a very different sort of king to the story book king that we have been talking about. Let's think of some of the ways in which Jesus is a different sort of king. Where was Jesus born – where might a king be born? Where did Jesus live? – where might a King live? What sort of work did Jesus do? What sort of work might a king do? If we think about the answers you have given about Jesus, we can see that his life was more like that of a servant than a king, so that is why we speak of him as being our Servant-King. Jesus is like a king and like a servant. He does not boss us around, but rather shows us by the way he lived with his family and friends, how we are to live our lives as members of his kingdom.

We are to serve one another as Jesus served the people of his day and as hundreds and hundreds of our Christian ancestors have done before us.

The Second Reading tells us what we should do if we are in need of God's help what does it say? What does Jesus mean when he says to the disciples that if they want to be great they must be the servant of all the others?

What does Jesus mean when he says that he did not come to be a slave master but

to be a slave? Who are the people you know who serve others in your parish, your school and in your family? How can we in our lives be like Jesus, and serve others?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to help compose a prayer for kings and queens, presidents and prime ministers who are in charge of their different countries: What gift do they need from God to do their jobs well?

Background to the Readings for Leaders

In the Gospel of Mark the disciples are often jumping to the wrong conclusions and setting off on the wrong track and Jesus is having to get them back on track. The Gospel reflects the difficulties Mark is facing in his own community at the time of writing and so he directs his listeners away from the example of the disciples to that of Jesus himself. Mark writes for non Jewish converts, probably Romans, during a time of persecution. Their land is occupied by the Roman Empire – hence the reference to foreigners who make themselves kings.

Reflection for Leaders

The nature of our Saviour is explored in the Second Reading from the letter to the Hebrews. Rather than being a High Priest in the old sense Jesus became fully human. Being fully human he is subject to the same temptations that assail each of us, yet he did not sin. Jesus has now become our advocate, to whom we can draw near in time of need as we would to our closest friend.

Jesus in the Gospel is faced with a question of power and the exercise of authority and power. He is put on the spot by a question from James and John the sons of Zebedee, "Grant us to sit one on your left and one on your right when you come into your kingdom" Jesus tells them that it is not in his power to decide who will do what in God's kingdom and says that whoever seeks power among us should look to serve the others and whoever would seek first place, ".....must be the slave of all."

We are not to look for rewards in terms of position, power and status in this life, rather we look to the example of Jesus the Messiah and Saviour who came as a servant, the slave of all. This is the challenge presented by Jesus to those who would follow him. To be a servant. Jesus gave his life for others by dying and also by the way he lived.

Ask the children how we can be like Jesus in our own way and in our own day to day lives.

If your parish offers morning tea after Mass, perhaps the children might take responsibility for handing around food to day.

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:

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, we celebrate your goodness to us by living as Jesus your Son taught us. Help us to remember that we are your children born to live with you forever. Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 53:4-12

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

(if included) Hebrews 4:14-16

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 10:35-45

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark. 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

PRAYERS 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 joyful hearts let us pray to our God for our needs:

• For the Church where the poor are welcomed, that the needs of all people will be met. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

• For those who suffer pain and loneliness, that they will be comforted. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

• For peace and an end to greed among the people of the South Pacific. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

• That we will serve others before ourselves in all things. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

God of Peace and Mercy you care for your people, hear the prayers we your children make to you through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

All:

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

Notes

Readings

Thirtieth Sunday of the Year

Green

Have you ever called out to Jesus as blind Bartimaeus did? Not only did this blind man recognise who Jesus is, he also realised what Jesus can do. Jesus responds with the classic call to discipleship, "Call him here." How did you respond to the call from Jesus to come closer?



Gospel

Mark 10: 46-52

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus and his disciples went to Jericho. As they were leaving they were followed by a large crowd.

A blind beggar by the name of Bartimaeus son of Timaeus was sitting beside the road. When he heard it was Jesus from Nazareth, he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!"

Many people told the man to stop, but he shouted all the louder, "Son of David, have pity on me!"

Jesus stopped and said, "Call him over!"

They called out to the blind man and said, "Don't be afraid! Come on! He is calling for you."

The man threw off his coat as he jumped up and ran to Jesus. Jesus asked: "What do you want me to do for you?"

The blind man answered, "Master, I want to see!"

Jesus told him, "You may go. Your eyes are healed because of your faith."

Right away the man could see, and he went down the road with Jesus.

The Gospel of the Lord.

First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

The Lord says: "Celebrate and rejoice for Israel, the greatest nation of all. Offer praises and shout, "Rescue your people Lord! Save what is left of Israel"

"I will bring my people back from that country in the north and from everywhere else. The blind and the lame will be there. Expectant mothers and women about to give birth will return and be a part of that great crowd.

"They will cry and pray as I bring them home. They won't stumble as I will lead them along a level road to streams of water.

"I am a father to Israel, and they are my favourite children."

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 125

Response: **The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.**

It seemed like a dream when the Lord brought us back to the city of Zion. We celebrated with laughter and joyful songs.

Our Lord, we ask you to bless your people again, and let us be like streams in the southern desert. We cried as we went out to plant our seeds.

Now let us celebrate as we bring in the crops.

We cried on our way to plant our seeds,

But we will celebrate and shout as we bring in the crops.

Second Reading

Hebrews 5: 1-6

A READING FROM THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

Brothers and sisters: Every high priest is appointed to help others by offering gifts and sacrifices to God because of their sins. A high priest has weaknesses of his own, and he feels sorry for weak and foolish people. That is why he must offer sacrifices for his own sins and for the sins of others.

But no one can have the honour of being a high priest simply by wanting to be one. Only God can choose a priest and God is the one who chose Aaron.

That is how it was with Christ. He became a high priest, but not just because he wanted the honour of being one. It was God who told him, "You are my Son, because today I have become your Father!" In another place, God says, "You are a priest forever just like Melchizedek."

The Word of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a blindfold

Images from the Readings

- Stop
- Call him
- Don't be afraid
- Threw off his coat
- Jumped up and ran
- Bring them 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.

Today's gospel is the story of the blind man whom Jesus healed. Do you have any children among your group who are visually impaired? They may be able to enrich this discussion. Alternatively, one or two children may volunteer to experience being blindfolded while you have this discussion?

Ask the children to remember what games they have played when they have been blind folded. (blind man's bluff; pin the tail on the donkey). Ask them to share what that experience was like for them.

Why do you think the people told Bartimaeus to stop calling out? (He was a nuisance, he couldn't join in, they could see that Jesus was there) Did Bartimaeus stop calling out? Why not? How did Jesus respond to Bartimaeus when he heard him calling out? How did Jesus response change the people's attitude to Bartimaeus? What did they do now?

How did Bartimaeus respond to Jesus' call and the encouragement of the people around him? What gift did Jesus give to Bartimaeus? What did Bartimaeus do when his eyes were healed? Take the blindfold off the children who participated in this story and ask them what they would like to offer this discussion.

Try to lead the children to see that there are different kinds of blindness – sometimes we can see things but not understand, or we can 'refuse' to see some things at all (use the different ways the people behaved around Bartimaeus to help this discussion). Explain that this is a story about faith and we can ask Jesus to help us to "see" how we can live the new way of life as one of his followers.

Act of Worship

Pray together:

Jesus, you made blind Bartimaeus to see,

Open my eyes to your love.

Jesus, you made the deaf people hear again,

Open my ears to hear your truth

Jesus, you help me to live your new way of life

Fill me with your joy.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The First Reading is a cause for hope and joy for the people of God especially the lost, the homeless, the disabled, the disadvantaged, those with child, all are given hope and can rejoice in the loving intervention of their God. Jeremiah was writing at a time when the Babylonian empire was threatening Israel and most of his writing pointed to the behaviour of the people as being the cause of their imminent doom.

The writer of the Hebrews reinforces the joy of finding in Jesus the priestly figure who acts as a go-between for people of all time, willingly taking their part as they strive to enter into the kingdom of God.

The Gospel reading shows how Jesus is the fulfilment of the promises made by the prophets. The blind see, the deaf hear, the lame leap with joy as they enter the kingdom of a God who never gives up and longs to bring his people home.

Reflection for Leaders

The Lord's words in the First Reading are like holding a sheltering umbrella over the heads of the people. The Lord can be seen through the language of the reading shepherding the people through the desert to a promised land 'flowing with milk and honey'. All the while they are cradled in God's loving arms. The journey of the people is emphasised here, that they will be lead beside brooks of running water, such a soothing image for people who are in the grip of the fear of defeat, destruction and slavery, the Lord promises to make their path straight and smooth without stones or bumps they might stumble over.

We find Bartimaeus in today's Gospel story, a blind beggar, sitting beside the road, crying out for Jesus who is passing by on his way up to Jerusalem. Asking to be made whole and to receive his sight, Bartimaeus is told by Jesus to go on his way, hat his faith has made him well. He receives his sight and follows Jesus along the road.

We can see how the two readings match, in the Gospel Jesus has become the flesh and blood messenger of the way to salvation, stripping away and lifting the blindness from those who cannot see and setting them down on the road to follow him.

Let's put ourselves in the place of Bartimaeus. What do we ask of Jesus and what are our blind spots?

Our crying out to God, is but a step on the way to our salvation, as the crying out

of the blind man is but the first step in his continuing journey. The objective of the journey is at life's end in the arms of a saving God. It is important for us not to get lost in the saving episodes and events of our journey, not to lose sight of where we are heading and of our ultimate goal. Even though the landmarks we pass along the way are important it is our journeys end that we must keep looking towards as we travel along.

Notes

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, you help us to see what is right, and how we should behave to others. Help us to live good lives and to help each other. Amen.

FIRST READING

Jeremiah 31:7-9

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 125

The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

(if included) Hebrews 5:1-6

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 10:46-52

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
 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

PRAYERS 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 ask God for our needs:

- For the Church home to the poor of heart. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- For justice and peace for all people. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- For a government in Aotearoa New Zealand that shows it cares for the poor. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- That we will show care for each other. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

Merciful God bless us and those for whom we pray, hear our prayers made to you through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

All:

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

Readings

Thirty First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

The first commandment that Jesus quotes is the great Jewish prayer known as the Shema (Deut 6: 4-5). This prayer is still recited each morning and evening by practicing Jews. This is an opportunity to ask ourselves how/if we still begin and end each day in prayer. Reciting this verse would be an ideal way to renew the practice of morning and evening prayer.



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.

You are the living God! I will praise you.

You are a mighty rock.

I will honour you for keeping me safe.

Second Reading

Hebrews 7: 26

A READING FROM THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

Brothers and sisters:

Jesus is the high priest we need. He is holy and innocent and faultless, and not at all like us sinners. Jesus is honoured above all beings in heaven.

The Word of the Lord.

Gospel Mark 12: 28-31

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

One of the teachers of the Law of Moses came up while Jesus and the Saducees were arguing. When he heard Jesus give a good answer, he asked him, "What is the most important question?"

Jesus answered, "The most important one says: 'People of Israel, you have only one Lord and God. You must love him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.' The second most important commandment says: 'Love others as much as you love yourself.' No other commandment is more important than these."

The Gospel of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a chart with times table or the alphabet on it

Images from the Readings

- Listen
- Love
- Important

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow the 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. Refer to the chart/s you have on the focus table and ask the children to share some of the things that they know “off by heart”. (songs, times tables, alphabet, poem, table manners, rules for games...)

Then ask what is useful about knowing some things “off by heart”. (trains your memory, helps you to read, play, do maths or other difficult tasks more easily, work things out in your head without needing paper, helps you to do good things automatically) Today’s Gospel clearly tells us how to love and serve God. “With all your heart, and with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” and “Love your neighbour as yourself”. If we do this then we are living exactly the way that God wants. In fact this commandment is so important that people sometimes refer to it as the “golden rule” Why do you think they might have given it that name? If we can concentrate on following this teaching how simple everything becomes. Renewing our intention to live in this way at the beginning and end of each day is a good way forward. So we are going to try learning this golden commandment that was first given to Moses, for the people of Israel, then later given by Jesus, to all his followers, as a new way of life, “off by heart”. Practice the following words and actions with the children, then use it prayerfully as the Act of Worship. This can be sung to the tune of “London’s Burning”

Act of Worship

You shall love the
Lord your God with
All your heart and
All your mind and
All your strength! All your strength!
And love each other, and love each other.

(hands on hearts)
(point upwards)
(hands on hearts)
(hold hands on heads)
(show biceps)
(arms around your neighbour’s
shoulders)

From *Living Water*, Susan Sayers with Fr Andrew Moore. Kevin Mayhew

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The First Reading is part of a new and different call for the people of Israel to have faith in one God. For them heart, mind and soul are not three separate parts but one. Love of heart, mind and soul means total commitment.

In Matthew’s gospel the scribes question was: “Teacher what is the greatest commandment of the law?” Today, in Mark’s Gospel, Jesus is in Jerusalem being confronted by the questions of the scribes and elders of the Jews. They try to trap Jesus but he explains their law to them in a way that they must accept, forcing them to agree with him, and he with them. (This was an uneasy and uncomfortable partnership for them.) And so they stop their probing questions. Jesus makes for his listeners and us the link between two cornerstone beliefs of the Jewish faith, proclaiming them one commandment, telling us if we cannot love our neighbour then we do not love God. We cannot separate the two: love is the fulfilment of the law. The final words ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ reflect Mark’s preoccupation with the kingdom that has been proclaimed and is at hand. That kingdom is being continually proclaimed when love of neighbour and of God rule the community.

Reflection for Leaders

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with your whole mind, with your whole soul and with all your strength. What does this sentence tell us about ourselves and our God. What does this phrase tell us about the relationship we have with God, what does it tell us about God’s relationship with us? It tells us who we are, where we came from, where we are going and how we are going to get there. All the law and every idea anyone ever had are summed up in this one relationship. Our duty is to live it out. The psalm sums up our response to the Good News of God’s love for us and our recognition that we must love God and our neighbour before all else, it is a song of love and praise to God, a personal God, a God who is close at hand:

....I love you, Lord, my strength,
my rock, my fortress, my saviour.
My God is the rock where I take refuge;
my shield, my mighty help, my stronghold.
The Lord is worthy of all praise:

It is love that describes our response to the Lord and to each other because somehow they are mixed together in the curious chemistry that we are.

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: Loving God, you call us your children and command us to love one another. With your help we will try to love each other and serve you. Amen.

FIRST READING

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalms 17

I love you, Lord, my strength.

(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

(if included) Hebrews 7:23-28

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 12:28-34

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
 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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH

PRAYERS 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 on our merciful God for all our needs:

- For the Church, that her leaders will be wise and serve her people.
 Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For an end to the suffering and misery of people caused by unjust governments. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.
- For people who suffer loneliness and who have no family or friends.
 Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

- That we will be the ones who reach out in friendship to the lonely and those without friends. Let us pray to the Lord. Lord hear our prayer.

Leader:

Merciful God look with compassion on your people, hear the prayers 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.

Notes

Readings

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

Today's readings show us that God cannot be outdone in generosity and the call for us is to match this generosity. All is surrendered, nothing is held back. The total giving of the widow prefaces the total self-giving of Jesus on the cross in Mark's Gospel.



First Reading I Kings 17: 10-16

A READING FROM THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

Elijah went to Zarephath, and near the city gate he saw a widow gathering sticks for a fire. He asked her to bring him a cup of water. When she started off to get the water, he asked, "Would you also bring me a piece of bread?"

The widow answered, "In the name of the living Lord your God, I swear that I don't have any bread! All I have is a handful of flour and a little olive oil. I'm on my way home now with these sticks to cook what I have for my son and me. After that we'll starve to death."

Elijah told the woman, "Don't worry! Do as you have said and fix something for yourself and your son. But first, make me a small piece of bread. The Lord God of Israel has promised that your jar of flour won't become empty, and your jar of oil will not dry up before he sends rain for the crops."

The widow left and did exactly what Elijah told her. So every day the widow and her family had food to eat. There was always flour and oil, just as the Lord had promised and Elijah had said.

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Response:

Psalm 146

Praise the Lord my soul!

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.

He defends the rights of widow and orphans.

Mark 12: 41-44

Gospel

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus was sitting in the temple near the offering box and watching people put in their gifts. He noticed that a lot of rich people were giving a lot of money.

Finally, a poor widow came up and put in two small coins that were worth only a few pennies.

Jesus told his disciples to gather around him. He said: "I tell you that this poor widow has put in more than all the others. Everyone else gave what they didn't need. But she is very poor and gave everything she had. Now she doesn't have a cent to live on."

The Gospel of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, some coins (play or real money)

Images from the Readings

- Two coins
- Everything
- Cup of water
- Did exactly what she was told

Discussion Points

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

Refer to the money on the focus table and ask: what would you do if you had two dollars to spend on a present for someone else? Talk about what fun it is to work out what we can do with two dollars and look out for some creative ideas like buying material to make something. How do you feel when people enjoy what you chose for them? What is it like when people say thank you? Can you think of some ways you can be generous to others without needing to spend any money? (sharing our time, talents, helpfulness, keeping our promises and commitments we make to others) Jesus wanted to teach his disciples about what it means to be generous. Who did he use as an example to them? Why did Jesus say she was more generous than the rich people even though she only gave two small coins? If you were Jesus teaching the disciples, what would you hope would happen next in this story? (the disciples might share some food with her or share some coins so she could buy some food) Can you think of someone else who was generous in the first story we read? What did she have to share? How difficult do you think it would have been for her to obey Elijah? What did she expect to have left for herself and her son? How are they the woman in the Gospel and the woman in the first reading alike? How are they different? What do you think Jesus wants us to learn about God's generosity? What do you think Jesus wants us to learn about being generous too?

Can you think of some wonderfully generous gifts that God gives all of us, every day? (good homes, food, families, friends, lots of sunshine to keep us warm, rain to make the plants grow, plenty of fresh air to keep us healthy, a beautiful world to make us happy)

Act of Worship

Invite the children to make one generous gift of their time, talent, help or pocket money to serve someone else this week. Help them to be practical and real about their ideas, according to their age. Ask the children to speak their promises out loud

then offer them all to God in the name of Jesus, our teacher and friend.

Background to the Readings for Leaders

It was during a long drought, which became an important part in Elijah's ministry that he encountered a widow in Zarephath, near Sidon, at the time everyone was suffering from the lack of rain and a shortage of food. Elijah himself is desperate as he approaches the woman gathering some scraps of sticks which she is about to use to prepare the family's last meal before they starve to death.

The two paragraphs that make up today's Gospel compare the religion of the Scribes and the Pharisees, who make sure they are seen to obey the Law, with the religion of the poor widow, who in the midst of the crowd drops her two cent pieces into the temple treasury collection. Jesus compares the men who "swallow the poverty of widows" with the widow herself. She was down to her last cent but gave it to God, even though it was all she had to live on.

A Reflection on the Readings

The jar of flour shall not be spent or the jar of oil fail, ".....until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth." Once again we hear the echo in today's First Reading of the phrase that is kept before us forever throughout scripture - "the Lords ways are not our ways". Once again faith and belief are rewarded with the providence of God. We can make this real for the children by sharing with them stories of people's faith that has prevailed through sickness and hardship of every kind. In the Gospel Jesus holds up for us an example of a person of goodness and faith - the poor widow who put a cent into the collection at the temple, put in everything she had, her whole living, and what an act of faith that was! What a detailed and interesting picture is painted in this scene from the life of Jesus. We see him seated there watching the people make their offerings to the temple treasury, some gave a lot of money, but Jesus focuses the attention of his disciples on the figure of the poor widow in the midst of the throng who gives all she has, about two one cent coins, and is swallowed up by the crowd. She must have been self-conscious, how did the other people treat her, how did she feel we wonder? These are all questions you can explore for yourself and the children. You can see how readily this story and that of the First Reading lend themselves to dramatic mime. Mime the generosity of the widow in both stories with small but open hearted gestures, contrasting with the loud, flamboyance and expansive gestures of the rich and their giving from their abundance, also with the fine clothes and manner and the respect generated by the scribes and Pharisees. We can focus on the importance of giving generously; not from our excess but from our own needs, showing our faith in a providential God.

God calls us to be generous in sharing what we have, it is the importance in us of the interior religion that God finds acceptable.

The Psalm today is very important because it sums up the spirit of the readings:

...."It is the Lord who keeps faith forever,
who is just to those who are oppressed."

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: Loving God, you give us life that we can serve you and give our love to others. Help us to give to others with generous hearts.
 Amen.

FIRST READING

Reader: 1 Kings 17:8-16
 The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 145
 Praise the Lord, my soul!
 (or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader: (if included) Hebrews 9:24-28
 The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 12:38-44

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark.
 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 opposite page for reflection ideas.)

PROFESSION OF FAITH**PRAYERS 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 ask God who loves us for our needs:

- For the Church protector of the poor. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.
- For those without shelter and food. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.

† For those who cannot find work in our country that they will not loose hope.
 Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.

- For our elderly, sick and lonely people. Let us pray to the Lord.
 Lord hear our prayer.

Leader: Merciful God you care for your people, shower your blessings upon us and on 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.

Notes

Readings

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Green

At the end of time, Jesus will return in power and glory and will welcome all those who have been chosen to join him in the kingdom of heaven.



First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET DANIEL

Prince Michael is the protector of your people, and he will appear when a time of terrible trouble comes. That will be the worst time in all history. Nothing like it has ever happened before.

But your people who have their names written in the book will be protected. Many of those who lie dead in the ground will rise from death. Some of them will be given eternal life, but others will receive nothing but eternal shame and disgrace. Everyone who has been wise will shine as bright as the sky above, and everyone who has led others to please God will shine like the stars.

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 16

Response: **Keep me safe, O God: you are my hope**

You, Lord, are all I want! You are my choice, and you keep me safe.

I will always look to you, as you stand beside me and protect me from fear

With all my heart, I will celebrate, and I can safely rest. I am your chosen one. You won't leave me in the grave or let my body decay.

You have shown me the path to life, and you make me glad by being near to me. Sitting at your right side, I will always be joyful.

Gospel

Mark 13:24-32

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus said to his disciples: "In those days, right after that time of suffering, the sun will become dark, and the moon will no longer shine. The stars will fall, and the powers in the sky will be shaken."

"Then the Son of Man will be seen coming in the clouds with great power and glory. He will send his angels to gather his chosen ones from all over the earth.

Learn a lesson from a fig tree. When its branches sprout and start putting out leaves, you know summer is near. So when you see all these things happening, you will know that the time has almost come. You can be sure that some of the people living today will still be alive when all this happens. The sky and the earth will not last forever, but my words will.

"No-one knows the day or the time. The angels in heaven don't know, and the Son himself doesn't know. Only the Father knows."

The Gospel of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a small sprig of greenery with new growth, or a spring-bulb just emerging

Images from the Readings

- God gathers his chosen ones
- Jesus' words will last forever
- You are my hope
- Be watchful

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 was using the example of a fig tree to talk about the time when he will come again. What was he telling the people about what the fig tree's leaves could show them? (summer was coming)

What was Jesus telling his disciples to do?

Jesus was telling the people that knowing when things are going to happen was not as important as the way that we live – how we try to love one another and how we act as his disciples. What is it that Jesus wants us to do? How are we to act and live? Jesus says his words will last forever. How do we know what Jesus' words were? Where do we find them?

Act of Worship

With reference to the spring bulb which begins to show signs of new growth, invite the children to hold hands and pray together: "Keep me safe, O God, and help me to grow into all that you want me to be. Amen"

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The readings are in symbolic language that tells us the time of salvation is not known for certain and that uncertainty increases the imaginative language used. It paints a picture of stressful times and disorder, a time when creation is in flux. By using a fig tree as a sign of the coming of summer, Jesus points out to his disciples that they must observe the world around them. The Psalm points the way to the attitude that we should adopt in the face of chaos and disorder, and offers us hope. The first Christian communities believed that the end times and Christ's second coming were very close, and it was only after many years when this did not happen that the language of the second coming was mellowed. Recognising the 'signs of the times' and responding in faith to changing circumstances is required of Christians.

Reflection for Leaders

The Gospel records practically the final message that Jesus shared with his disciples before his passion, so it is not surprising that he concentrates on helping them to understand something of the end times. This language is termed 'apocalyptic', and was a literary style common at the time. We need to remember to not try to understand it in the literal sense, but focus on the message that was being conveyed: to live in anticipation of the end of our own life or times. Jesus tells his disciples to spread the Good News and live in anticipation of the time when God's plan comes to fruition.

What does this mean to us? What might the world look like if God was again 'Lord of all Creation'?

Do you ever contemplate your own death?

Reflect on times when you have experienced chaos and disorder. Times when you have felt things were happening around you that you could not control. What did this feel like?

What signs of growth, life, death or change do you see around you – in the natural world, your community, your family, yourself?

What helps you to live in an expectant and watchful way?

What words of Jesus stay with you most powerfully? Why?

Be attentive to change this week.

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: Loving God, thank you for the gift of faith we received at our baptism. May we always recognise our faith as a gift and learn to share it with others. Amen

FIRST READING

Reader Daniel 12:1-3
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 15
 Keep me safe, O God.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader: *(if included)* Hebrews 10:11-14, 18
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 13:24-32

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark
 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 glad hearts let us pray to God for all our needs.

- For the church that her leaders will be wise and lead others to please God
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
 - For families that are strong and pray together
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
 - That the people of Aotearoa-New Zealand will be watchful and caring for those who suffer injustice
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
 - For the sick and lonely of our community and our town/city, that they many find comfort and friendship
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- Leader: Merciful God, 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.

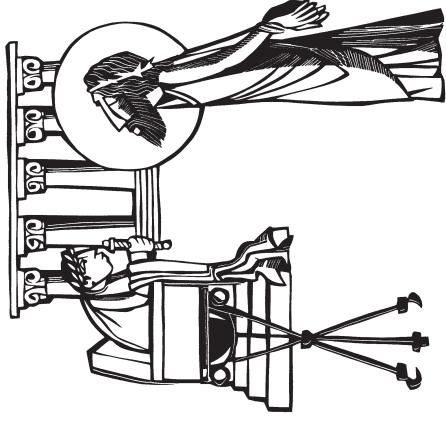
Notes

Readings

Feast of 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 our thoughts to the time when Christ will return as king.



Gospel

John 18:33b-37

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Pilate called Jesus over and asked, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Are you asking this on your own or did someone tell you about me?"

"You know I'm not a Jew!" Pilate said. "Your own people and the chief priests brought you to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If it did, my followers would have fought to keep the Jewish leaders from handing me over to you. No, my kingdom does not belong to this world."

"So you are a king," Pilate replied.

"You are saying that I am a king," Jesus told him. "I was born into this world to tell about the truth. And everyone who belongs to the truth knows my voice."

The Gospel of the Lord

First Reading

Daniel 7:13-14

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET DANIEL

During the night I had a vision, and I saw what looked like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven.

He came toward the Eternal God and was led into his presence, where he was honoured and given the power to rule as king. People of every nation and language worshipped him.

He will rule forever, and his kingdom will never be destroyed.

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 93

Response: **The Lord is king, he is robed in majesty.**

Our Lord, you are King! Majesty and power are your royal robes. You put the world in place, and it will never be moved.

You have always ruled, and you are eternal. Your decisions are firm, and your temple will always be beautiful and holy.

Second Reading

Revelations 1:5-8

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF REVELATION

May kindness and peace be yours from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness.

Jesus was the first to conquer death, and he is the ruler of all earthly kings.

Christ loves us, and by his blood he set us free from our sins. He lets us rule as kings and serve God his Father as priests. To him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen.

Look! He is coming with the clouds. Everyone will see him, even the ones who stuck a sword through him. All people on earth will weep because of him. Yes, it will happen! Amen.

The Lord God says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the one who is and was and is coming. I am God All-Powerful!"

The Word of the Lord

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a crown and an image of Jesus

Images from the Readings

- The truth
- Knowing Jesus' voice
- People from every nation and language worshipped him
- The Alpha and the Omega
- He will rule forever

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 sort of a King is Jesus? Is he like Queen Elizabeth II, or the Kings and Queens we read about in fairytales?

What is the difference between an earthly king who rules an earthly kingdom, and Jesus' kingship?

Jesus' kingdom is one of truth, love and peace. How do we know this?

When Pilate asks Jesus questions, what is he trying to find out?

What does Jesus tell him? Who does he say that he is?

In what ways can Jesus' kingdom be lived out here today?

What are the things that we can do to be more truthful, caring and peace-filled in our families and schools?

Act of Worship

Invite the children to stand in front of the image of Jesus and the crown and make a deep bow as they say together "The Lord is King; He is clothed in majesty"

Background to the Readings for Leaders

In the first Reading, Daniel saw in a vision a human figure that was led into the presence of God. The tradition of the Jews later interpreted this figure as someone who would judge all the nations in the name of God. From here it was only a small step for Christians to see the human figure as Jesus the Christ, risen to glory at the right hand of God. The writing of both the first and second readings is highly imaginative, so we need to be aware to avoid literal interpretation. The symbolism

of the second Reading is to do with three aspects of Jesus' mission – giving witness, the victory of the resurrection, and God as the master and shaper of history. The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet reflect God's place as the starting point and the end point of history.

In the gospel, Pilate, as prefect or governor of the Roman province of Judea, holds power. His reputation as insensitive to Jewish religious practices was expressed often as brutal force to repress dissent against Roman rule. He struggles to come to grips with the reality of what Jesus presents him with in an attempt to trap him into an admission of guilt – "Are you a king? ... What have you done? ... So you are a King?"

The crime Jesus was tried and executed for was sedition – the claim that he was the 'King of the Jews' was a direct threat to the Emperor. Crucifixion was a Roman punishment not a Jewish one.

Reflection for Leaders

Even though it appears that Pilate is sitting in judgement on Jesus, in truth it is Jesus who is Pilate's judge. The 'truth' talked of here refers to the fact of God as eternal creator, contrasted against the temporal things of the world. If Jesus is King, then all Christians belong to a royal race. The Church is Christ's people, yet ours is a kingship of service which has no concern for the things of the world. We are to bear witness to truth and be messengers of truth, standing for peace and justice for all who are oppressed.

In our reflection today we might consider what are some of the conflicts between the values of the society we live in today and values of the kingdom of Jesus?

In a world in which few 'kings' remain, how can Christ the King be given meaning today?

In what ways has Jesus become 'king' of your life?

Today's feast marks the end of the liturgical year. What has been important to you this year? Have you noticed change and progress in your faith journey? How are you progressing in your own search for truth?

Liturgy Outline

Feast of 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:

- Blessed be God
- Blessed be God

Leader:

Loving God,
thank you for sending your only son to be our saviour.
Help us to know and love your truth. Amen

FIRST READING

Reader

Daniel 7:13-14
The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 92

The Lord is king, he is robed in majesty.
(or another suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING

Reader:

Revelation 1:5-8
The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

John 18:33-37

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 glad hearts let us pray to God for all our needs.

- For the church that it will be a place where truth and justice flourish
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For peace in the war-torn parts of the world
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the land and seasons will bear plenty of food for all the people of the world
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- That the sick and lonely amongst us will be comforted
Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

Leader:

Saving God, shower your blessings and protection upon us and those for whom we pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen

All:

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

Notes

Readings

Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul

Acts 12: 1-11

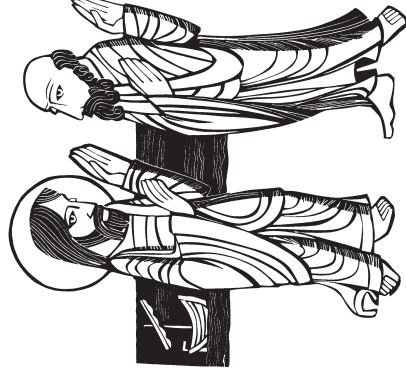
A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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 Unleavened 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 kept in jail, the church never stopped praying for him.

The night before Peter was 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 shone 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 wrists, and the angel said, "Get dressed and put on your sandals." Peter did as he was told. The angel said, "Now put on your cloak 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 leading into the city, it opened by itself. They went out and were going along the street, when all at once the angel disappeared.

Peter now realized 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.

This Sunday we celebrate the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. It was through Peter's witness and Paul's preaching that the Church came into being. Together, they were the greatest leaders of the early Church.

Red

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 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, '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 do not allow."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Response:

The Lord set me free from all my fears

Psalm 34

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, statues or images 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 the 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 leader of the Catholic Church today? (Pope Benedict) What do you know about his life and where he lives? Why is he such an important person for the Church. (He is our spiritual leader, the successor of St Peter and St Paul, who were the very first leaders of the Church. Pope Benedict works closely with all the bishops of the Church to teach us and lead us in the ways of Jesus.)

Before Peter became a great leader in the church what did he do? (He was a fisherman and a disciple of Jesus) Did Peter always do the right thing? (No – he sometimes made mistakes. His faith failed him when he tried to walk on water. He denied Jesus three times.) What does this tell us about the people God chooses to do great things for him? (He chooses people who are willing to learn and to try new things; who are willing to say sorry and learn from their mistakes. He chooses people who truly want to do God's will and he gives these people the help 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 made Paul change his life so drastically? (You may need to recount the story of Paul's conversion if the children are unfamiliar with it) What does this tell us about the people God chooses to do great things for him? (God will work hard to get people to listen to his call. He is willing to forgive people who have done serious harm to others if they are willing to change and to learn to think and act differently.) Paul became a great preacher, travelling all over the world to build new Christian communities. He wrote many letters and visited these new churches to help them grow strong in their faith. We still listen to his letters being read to us on Sundays.

Can you remember how God helped St Peter get out of Prison? (angel) Can you remember any other stories where God sent angels to be with his people? (Abraham's visitors, Jacob's ladder, Daniel in the Lion's den, Nativity, Agony in the Garden) God has a special plan for each one of our lives. God has given each of us different gifts and talents and he will help us to use them in the service of Jesus and the

Church. It could be that one of you will be a leader in the Church one day, like Peter or travel to people in other lands to take them the message of God's love, like St Paul. What ever any one of us is called to do for God, we can be sure that God has given each one of us an angel to help and guide us.

Act of Worship

Prayer to our Guardian Angel

Angel sent by God to guide me,
Be my light and walk beside me;
Be my guardian and protect me;
On the paths of life direct me

Background for Leaders

The earliest "Roman" Calendar we have, dates back to 350AD and mentions this feast being celebrated on the 29 June. This feast spread rapidly through Africa in to rest of Christendom. Numerous churches and schools have been built in their honour. Yet, interestingly, in their life and ministry, the two saints were not involved all that closely together. However, in their separate ways, Peter and Paul are considered to be the two pillars of the Church. Peter – the shepherd of the flock who governed from his 'chair' in Rome, and Paul, the 'Apostle to the nations' who travelled all over the world, founding communities of faith, encouraging and building them up by his letters and his visits.

Reflection for Leaders

This Solemnity reminds us of the need for diversity in vocations and ministry in the church. Neither of these two leaders could have achieved what they did without the help and assistance of numerous other women and men beside them.

Spend some time this week reflecting on how you use your different gifts and talents – are there some new ways you could put them to use in the service of God?
Renew your thinking about the presence of angels in your life – in human and heavenly form. How does their presence assist you in 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, 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

Reader Acts 12: 1-11
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 34
 The Lord set me free from all my fears
 (or other suitable response known by the children)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

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: Let us pray to God our creator for 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 for their mission.
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
 - That those who work in prisons and those who visit prisoners may be encouraged to persevere and act with dignity.
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
 - That we may be grateful to God for the angels who keep us company on our journey through life
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- Leader: God of all peoples, give us the faith and courage of Peter and Paul to carry the Word of God to others. We pray through Christ our Lord.
 All: Amen

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

Notes

Readings

Feast of the Transfiguration

White

Today we celebrate the transfiguration, the moment when Peter, James and John saw Jesus in the fullness of his glory. It left them amazed, and was a sign to help them through the upcoming days when Jesus was to be crucified.


First Reading
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 made up. But with our own eyes we saw his true greatness.

God, our own dear 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 the daylight comes and the morning star rises in your hearts.

The Word of the Lord

Responsorial Psalm

Response:

Psalm 97

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.

Mark 9: 2-10

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain, apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.

And there appeared to them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." Peter did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved, listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no-one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So the disciples kept this matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

A White Cloth, the Lectionary, and several candles to create a bright light.

Images from the Readings

- Alone
- Dazzling white
- Terrified
- The beloved
- Listen to him

Discussion Points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow the 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 experience being dazzled by the sun or a bright light? What was it like? How did you feel? What happens when you get out of that light?

In the Gospel story today we read about Jesus taking his special friends up a high mountain, all by themselves. What happened while they were there? (they were dazzled by the bright light around Jesus, they saw Moses and Elijah talking to him, they heard God's voice speaking from heaven) How did they feel? (terrified). What happened afterwards (they only saw Jesus , they came down from the mountain, Jesus told them not to say anything).

Can you remember what God said from the cloud? "This is my Beloved Son, listen to him!"

Ask the children if they can remember any specific things that Jesus has said to us – try to help them to remember specific words or sayings eg: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your mind and love other people as you love yourself"

"Be not afraid" "Blessed are those who mourn, they will be comforted"

If we think carefully about who Jesus really is – the Son of God – we realize that what he asks us to do is very important. That is why we listen to him, and live our lives the way he asks us to.

Act of Worship

Ask the children to close their eyes and sit quietly. Once they have settled down read the following to them slowly and deliberately. "Imagine you are going for a walk up a mountain...it is a beautiful day... as you get near the top you see a shady tree... you can see someone sitting there, looking out over the countryside. When

you come closer you realize that it is Jesus who is waiting for you...he smiles and invites you to sit down beside him. Quietly, in your mind, have a conversation with Jesus. You can tell him about anything that is on your mind, perhaps you are excited about something...perhaps you are worried about something...Jesus will listen to you. PAUSE Listen now to what Jesus wants to say to you. PAUSE Quietly, when you are ready, open your eyes.

Background For Leaders

In the Hebrew scripture, high mountains are seen as holy places; we remember the Ten Commandments were given to Moses on Mt Sinai, that Elijah heard the voice of God on Mt Horeb. That the transfiguration occurs on a high mountain directs us to a moment of significance. The presence of Moses – the giver of the Law - and Elijah – a prophet - can be seen as a signal to the disciples that Jesus is the fulfilment of both the Law and the Prophets. It also allows the disciples to foresee the glory that is to be given to Jesus at the end of his Easter journey. This fleeting moment of revelation leaves them terrified and unable to grasp the full significance of what they have seen. These same three disciples are present at the agony in the garden, the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus, yet in spite of all that Jesus showed them and told them, they still did not understand. It is only much later, after Jesus resurrection from the dead, that they remember what happened on the mountain and are then able to bear witness to the truth that was revealed to them.

Reflection for Leaders

In his encyclical, *Deus Caritatis 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 this week to reflect on your Christian journey. What have been some significant moments of encounter for you? Has there ever been a moment, when, moved by an experience of prayer, the sacraments, or insight from scripture or the example of another person's faith, you have felt drawn to make a change in your life, or a move in a new direction.

In the difficult moments of your life, what has given 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, 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

Reader

2 Peter 1: 16-19
The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 97
The Lord is King, most High over all the earth
(or other suitable response known by the children)

SECOND READING not included this week

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(Sing)
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 9: 2-10

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark
□ 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 are scared or worried, that we may notice and take time to help them
Let us pray to the Lord □ Lord hear our prayer
 - For the willingness to listen to Jesus and say 'Yes' to his way of life even when we don't understand everything
Let us pray to the Lord □ Lord hear our prayer
 - For all who have heard the message of Jesus, that the witness of their lives may be like a bright 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 Risen Lord.
All: Amen

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

Notes

Readings

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

White

God chose Mary to be the mother of his son, Jesus. Mary was always ready and willing to do whatever God wanted. Because she was so special 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 our lives?



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 voice, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed there would be a fulfilment 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 his descendants for ever." And Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months and then returned to her home.

The Gospel of the Lord.

The First reading for this day is from the Book of Revelation, and is considered unsuitable for young children. In accord with the guidelines offered by the Directory of Masses with Children, it is recommended that the focus of today's liturgy be the Gospel.



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

Discussion points

Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow the 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 is a promise? Do you think it is important to keep a promise? Why? How do you feel when someone keeps a promise made to you?

God wanted to keep a promise to his people to send us a Saviour. Both Elizabeth and Mary were helping God to keep his promise. He gave them special gifts because they said 'Yes' to helping that promise come true. Can you recognize those gifts in this story? (Joy, friendship, help for each other, filled with the Holy Spirit)

Mary teaches us how to be a follower of Jesus and we know she is in heaven because she was true to God in her life and a wonderful mother to Jesus. This feast, the Assumption, is a special day in our Church year. It is the day when we remember and celebrate that God took Mary into heaven, body and soul, to be with Jesus forever because she helped him to keep his promise. Mary is so important to us that we use some of the words from our gospel story today in our prayers and our hymns. Did you recognize some of those prayers or hymns? (Hail Mary, The Rosary, The Magnificat)

Act of Worship

Sing *The Magnificat* or teach the children the prayer, *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 Mary undertakes to go to her (and return) 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 us towards the greatness of God. Nothing is impossible for God.

The Feast of the Assumption was declared dogma in 1950, but belief in God's action in taking Mary body and soul to heaven has been part of church tradition since around 500 AD. In New Zealand, our Church has been dedicated to Mary, assumed into heaven. The Feast of the Assumption is our Patronal Feast Day. It is a Holy Day of Obligation.

Reflection for Leaders

Mary has always been upheld by the Church as the first model of discipleship. She perfectly co-operated with God's plan through her heartfelt 'Yes' to being the Mother of Jesus.

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. Do you recognize ways in which God has honoured you, with promises? In what ways do you proclaim the greatness of God in your Life? This week, reflect on some of the things you know God has done for you, and give thanks once again.

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: 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 (Not included)

PSALM (Not included)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

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: Let us pray to God our creator for all our needs.

- For a church that teaches her people to pray
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For people in need, that we may notice and take time to help them
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For the courage to say 'Yes' to God even when we don't understand everything
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer
- For ourselves that we will be wise in knowing what promises to make and faithful in keeping them
 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.

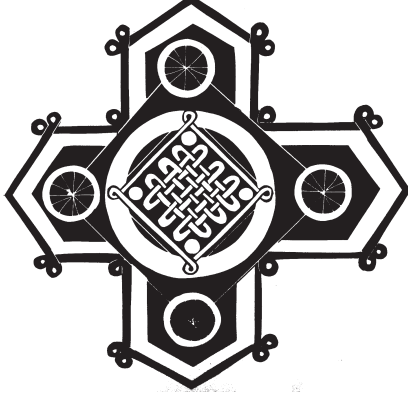
Notes

Readings

Triumph of the Holy Cross

White

The Gospel reading of this day 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.



First Reading

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

Response:

Psalm 78

Do not forget the works of the Lord!

Give ear; O my people, to my teaching;

Incline your ear to the words of my mouth.

I will open my mouth in a parable;

I will utter dark sayings from of old.

When they were being killed, the people looked for God;

They were sorry for their sins and sought him earnestly.

They remembered that God was their rock,

The Most High God their redeemer.

John 3: 13-17

Gospel

A READING FROM THE 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 the 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 so loved the people of this world 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

In accordance with the instructions in the "Directory for Masses with Children", and in keeping with the readings in the Lectionary for Masses with Children, this week's second reading has been omitted.

Preparatory Material

Suggested Focus

Red cloth, Lectionary, candle, crucifix or cross

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: Where are you likely to see a symbol of a cross? (church, school, home, jewellery)

Christian people use a cross to remind them of the healing power of God's love. How did that healing power work for Moses and the people bitten by the serpent? How did the healing power of God's love reach Jesus when he was on the cross? (God raised Jesus to new life in the resurrection) How does the healing power of God's love reach us now? (When we, who believe in Jesus look at the cross we are reminded that God reaches down to us in our suffering and finds a way to raise us to new life just like he did for Jesus)

You may like to tell the children the story of Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine who is said to have discovered the true cross on Sept 14, 320. This day commemorates the building of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which is built on the sites of Calvary and the tomb where Jesus was laid. Constantine legalised Christianity in the Roman Empire in 313AD

Act of Worship

Join hands together and bow deeply to the Cross before making and singing the sign of the cross together

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

Year A, B & C

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

Reader Numbers 21:4-9
 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

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Minister of the Word:

Glory to you, Lord

John 3:13-17

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.

Notes

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 to 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 things. 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

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 on 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 in it belongs 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 mountain 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 or 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 the 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.

Jesus teaches us that God blesses those people who make peace. Do you know what peace is? (quietness, calmness, not having trouble) The peace that Jesus gave to his followers was special. Do you know what was special about it? (It is a gift from the Holy Spirit) How do we know we have this gift? (peace comes to us when we wait quietly in our hearts to meet Jesus) When would be a good time of the day to spend some peaceful time with God? (the children will give different answers; encourage them to think about times when they are upset, or worried, or angry. Taking time out to find this peace that is always with them can be very helpful)

What happens to us when we live like peaceful people? (we become more gentle, truthful, wise and understanding because we are able to hear God's voice in our hearts. Other people and animals too, like to be around peaceful people. It helps them to feel good too.

Act of Worship

The Litany of the Saints is a prayer asking many saints to pray for us. It is most commonly prayed at the Easter Vigil and at ordination ceremonies, but can be used at many times. Pray this shortened version with the children. Be sure to include the names of the saints of your parish or school.

Leader

Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy
Holy Mary
St Michael
St John the Baptist
St Peter
St Dominic
St Therese
Blessed Mary MacKillop
All holy men and women

Children

Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us

Background to the Readings for Leaders

The communion we share with Mary and the Saints in every liturgy is highlighted very clearly today. As early as the fourth century the saints were commemorated in the Eucharistic Prayer. At first the commemoration was that of martyrs from the local area or others who were particularly important to the Church like Mary, Peter and Paul. Later, after the time of persecution ended, Saints who were not martyrs were added to the list. Catalogues were drawn up and were intended to be universal. These catalogues were called martyrologies and included names, dates and details of each saint's life. Some monasteries still read daily from the martyrology. In more recent years we have seen the revision of this calendar. Saints whose details could not be confirmed historically have had their names removed while people from more recent times, like Blessed Mary MacKillop, are being added. The importance of these saints is to point us towards God, to show us how to live ever more faithfully by Gospel values, as they did during their lives. We remember them and celebrate with them whenever we gather for Eucharist. One day we will join with them in worshipping God in the heavenly liturgy.

Reflection for Leaders

Take time this week to read an account of the life of a saint and let yourself be inspired. Think about the saint your parish is named after. You may choose to read a novel length biography or autobiography such as the *Story of A Soul*, (St Therese of Lisieux) or read some 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, 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

Reader Revelation 7: 9-10
 The Word of the Lord
 Thanks be to God

PSALM

Psalm 24
 Lord this is the people that longs to see your face
 (or other suitable response known by the children)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (Sing)
 Alleluia, alleluia.

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 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 who mourn that they may be comforted
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

• For those who are treated badly for doing the right thing, that they may receive strength and courage
 Let us pray to the Lord Lord hear our prayer

• For ourselves that we will make time in our lives to meet with Jesus and know peace in our hearts and our lives
 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.

Notes