



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

Children's Liturgy of the Word

Twenty-Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A.....	1
Theme: Forgiveness	1
Objectives.....	2
Leader's Preparation:	2
Environment and materials.....	2
Background	2
Prayer Leader Reflection Questions.....	3
The Liturgy.....	3
Procession from the main Church.....	3
Welcome.....	3
Lectionary Readings.....	4
Reflection	6
The Creed	7
Prayer of the Faithful	7

Twenty-Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A

Theme: Forgiveness

Objectives

- † To help children understand that forgiveness is a requirement of Christian life.
- † To help children see the connection between the parable of the debtor and forgiveness.

Leader's Preparation:

- † Read the Lectionary readings.
- † We receive forgiveness from God as a gift. God's mercy is abundant, and Christ invited his disciples through instruction and teaching parables to share in abundant forgiveness without limit.
- † We separate ourselves from God when we do not forgive as God forgives us.
- † Praying the Lord's Prayer is an opportunity to seek help with and reflect on the forgiveness we have received and given.

Environment and materials

- † Two screened adult leaders.
- † Liturgical space for Children's Liturgy of the Word.
- † Candle, table, liturgical colours, and any other visual aids.
- † Read the lectionary readings and backgrounds.
- † Bookmark the readings in the Bible. Place the Bible in a prominent location for the children to see when they enter the space for the Children's Liturgy of the Word.
- † Prepare any hymns that the children will sing as they gather in the space for the Children's Liturgy of the Word.
- † Select volunteers (older children or adults) to proclaim the readings.
- † Display the responsorial psalm refrain lyrics, if possible and desired.
- † Display the Creed, if possible and desired.

Background

Sirach 27:30-28:7

- † The book of Sirach was initially written by Jesus ben Sirach around 130 BC.
- † We are all sinners who need forgiveness, calling us to forgive others in the hope that we might be forgiven.
- † It is based on the belief that God loves us first without us meriting God's love.
- † Because God forgives us first, we are called to forgive others.

Matthew 18:21-35

- † Matthew wants us to know that the ability and willingness to forgive without limit is the essential nature of any community modelled on Christ.
- † The limitless nature of forgiveness is stressed for the whole community.
- † Peter thinks he is generous, forgiving someone seven times.
- † Jesus responds with seventy times seven times. The number communicates that forgiveness ought to have no limits.
- † The king (God) forgave an unbelievably large debt from his household servant. The same servant (us) was unwilling to forgive the smallest debts on his fellow servant's part.
- † The parable's moral centers on the community's need to act with God-like compassion toward all.
- † This pattern of acting is the basis for all relationships within Christ's community. It moves every person to forgive others from the heart, as God has forgiven us.

Prayer Leader Reflection Questions

The leader may want to reflect upon one of the questions below.

- † For what do you need forgiveness?
- † Who do you need to forgive?

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

Priest: Dear children, today's Scriptures teach us the importance of forgiving others and asking for their forgiveness. For God, love means forgiving us through his Son Jesus. Go now and listen to him.

One of the leaders carries the Book of God's Word, held high for all to see. The second leader assists by directing the children to form a procession behind the leader with the book. When it appears that most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the place of the celebration. The second leader usually walks behind the children to ensure they remain in the procession. Upon arrival at the place of the celebration, the leader places the book on the prepared table. The parish music minister may have selected a song of dismissal for the assembly to sing while the children leave.

Welcome.

The leaders assist the children to sit, welcome them and invite them to participate in the prayer. When the children are seated and settled, one of the leaders or a child may light the candle beside the book.

The leader may say the prayer.

O God, allow our hearts to be open to your Word so we may serve you completely. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Invite the children to sit and listen to the readings.

Lectionary Readings

One of the leaders (or an older child who has prepared the text) stands, takes the book from the table, stands behind the table, and proclaims the first reading. The reading is concluded with: The Word of the Lord. All respond: Thanks be to God.

FIRST READING

Sirach 27.30 - 28.4, 7

Forgive your neighbour for the wrong that is done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.

A reading from the book of Sirach.

Anger and wrath are abominations, yet a sinner holds on to them.

The vengeful will face the Lord's vengeance, for he keeps a strict account of their sins.

Forgive your neighbour for the wrong that is done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.

Does anyone harbour anger against another and expect healing from the Lord?

If one has no mercy toward another like oneself, can one seek pardon for one's sins?

Remember the commandments, and do not be angry with your neighbour; remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook faults.

The Word of the Lord.

The leader may teach the children to respond: Thanks be to God.

A period of silence is observed following the proclamation. It may be helpful for the leader to invite the children to think about some particular aspect of the reading during this time. Perhaps the gesture of bowing heads and closing eyes will foster the effective use of this silent period.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

The responsorial psalm is sung. It is recommended that the same setting used in the parish on the day be used. Suppose music ministers are not available to lead the singing. In that case, a recording may assist the children in responding. A Seasonal psalm may also be used.



1. The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?
2. One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after;
to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord,
and to inquire in his temple.
3. I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord; be strong,
and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

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GOSPEL

The children stand for the Gospel. The leader proclaims the Gospel. At the beginning, the Gospel is announced as in the book. All respond: Glory to you, Lord. All sign themselves on the forehead, lips and breast. The leader concludes the Gospel with The Gospel of the Lord. All respond: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 18.21-27

Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

✠A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Peter came and said to Jesus,

"Lord, a brother or sister sins against me. How often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times.

"For this reason, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him a huge amount was brought to him, and, as he could not pay, his Lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made.

So he fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' The Lord released him and forgave him the debt.

The Gospel of the Lord.

The children sit to listen to the reflection, which can be in these or similar words.

Reflection

In today's Gospel reading, Peter asks Jesus: "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?"

I don't know about you, but seven times seems like a lot. For example, if my sister hit me once, "Ouch!" it would hurt, but maybe if she hit me by accident, I could forgive her. If she hit me again, "Ouch! Ouch!" it probably wasn't an accident, but still, I might not have a hard time forgiving. Even a third time, maybe I could keep forgiving, but seven? "Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Ouch!" That's a lot of times that I am hurt! And how does Jesus answer the question? He tells Peter to forgive "not seven times but seventy-seven times."

Do you think Jesus meant to stop forgiving on the seventy-eighth time?

No! It was a way of saying, "Keep forgiving. Never stop." Why would Jesus say such a thing? When someone has a debt, it means that the person borrowed something. The person who borrowed is known as a debtor. The debtor owed a lot of money. In fact, it was so big that it was more than he could repay. When the king asked for his money back, the debtor asked for mercy, and the king had compassion. The king forgave the whole amount! This story tells us something about God. We know that when we ask for mercy, God shows us compassion.

The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: We do believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who became our brother and gave his life for us?

All: We do believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: We do believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

Invite the children to think of the needs of others and to announce their petitions. The leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. When the children's name is needed, it may be necessary for the leader to repeat and/or paraphrase the petition and conclude it with the cue for the response: For this, we pray. All respond to each petition by saying: Lord, hear our prayer. Sample intercessions are below.

Leader: Grateful for our faith, we now pray to God.

Please respond, "Lord, hear our prayer." **R.**

For Pope Francis and Douglas, our bishop, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For government leaders, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For our families, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For the sick, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

The leader may invite other intercessions from the children or add intercessions based on the Church's current needs, the world, or the local community.

For all who have died, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

Merciful God, you are compassion and love. Grant that we, your children, may always seek your forgiveness and forgive our brothers and sisters. Through Christ our Lord.

Children: Amen.

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and perhaps think about what they have heard and are now doing.

Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.

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