



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

Children's Liturgy of the Word

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Twenty-Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A

Theme: Strive to do God's will

Objectives

- † To help children see sin as missing the mark.
- † To explore the parable as ongoing conversion.

Leader's Preparation:

- † Pray the Lectionary readings.
- † Sin is part of our lives and affects our relationship with God.
- † Throughout history, God calls us to continually grow closer by overcoming sin.
- † Jesus made it possible to overcome sin.
- † People are oriented to goodness.
- † God desires us to direct our decisions toward good and just decisions.

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

Ezekiel 18:25-28

- † Ezekiel sheds light on taking personal responsibility for one's actions.
- † The passage deals with God's justice when judging us based on present actions and patterns of behaviour.
- † Some claimed that God was not fair.
- † God responds by insisting that justice is not dispensed according to past merits but based on what a person does in the present.
- † If sinners turn to God in repentance, they will be forgiven.
- † Ezekiel challenges us to examine our behaviour patterns, discerning whether we are aligned with God.

Matthew 21:28-32

- † The parable of the two sons being sent by their father to work in the vineyard, set in the context of siblings, is often used as symbolic characters to represent dichotomy.
- † The dichotomy between those who agree with God but do not do and those who do not obey God but eventually follow through illustrates the heart's intent.
- † Those who think they are righteous are usually blind to a need for repentance and forgiveness.
- † Those who know they are not righteous see the need and are open to repentance and forgiveness.

Prayer Leader Reflection Questions

- † How do you miss the mark in your obedience to God's will?
- † How do you conform your attitude to that of Christ?

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: Children, do not worry about comparing yourself to others because God gives us his Son, Jesus, who is the most important reward possible. He comes to you now to speak to you in the Scriptures. 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 Ezekiel 18:25-28

A reading from the book of the Prophet Ezekiel

Our God says,

This is how I am—

When people turn away from me and sin, they are punished for it.

But when people are sorry for their sins, change their lives, and do what is right, they are not punished; they are saved.

The Word of the Lord.

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

A period of silence is observed. Inviting the children to think about some particular aspect of the reading during this time may be helpful. 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, if possible. If not, the leader invites the children to respond with the response. A Seasonal psalm may also be used.



The Lord is my light and my sal - va - tion.

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 Matthew 21:28-32

The children stand for the Gospel. The leader proclaims the Gospel.

✠A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All respond: Glory to you, Lord. All sign themselves on the forehead, lips and breast.

Jesus said to the chief priests and the leaders of the people,

**"I'm going to tell you a story,
and you tell me what you think about it.**

"There was a man who had two sons.

One day, he said to one of them,

**'Son, I want you to go out and work in the vineyard
today.'**

"The boy said,

'No, I won't go.'

**"But, later, the boy was sorry that he had said 'no' to his
father,**

and so he did go. The father then said to his other son,

'Son, I want you to go out and work in the field today.'

"The second son said,

'Yes, father, I will go and work,' but he did not go."

Jesus asked,

**Now tell me, which boy did what the father wanted him
to do,**

the first son or the second?"

The leaders answered,

"The first son."

The Gospel of the Lord.

The leader concludes the Gospel with The Gospel of the Lord. All respond: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The children sit to listen to the reflection.

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words.

The colour green in our Church is a sign that we are in Ordinary Time, a time of growing. We may hear the same ideas over a few weeks in a different way during this growing time. Last week, we talked about how God thinks. This week, how does God think about sinners?

What is sin? (Invite a few short responses and try to return to the reflection in a straightforward and reasonable time.)

To sin is to miss the mark. Imagine an arrow flying toward a target. There is a path that the arrow should take to hit the bullseye, and if the arrow travels off the path, it will land off the mark, away from where it is supposed to be. We all miss the mark sometimes. Everyone has sinned.

In the Gospel parable about the two sons, the father asks his two sons to help him. His sons answer him in two different ways. The first says no but later changes his mind. The other says yes but never actually does what his father asked. Jesus asked his listeners, "Which of the two did his father's will?"

Did it matter that the second son said yes first if later he didn't do what his father asked? (An alternate question could be: "How would you answer this question?")

What matters is how we act now. If we ask, God wants to forgive us if we have done or said something wrong in the past. When we turn away from sin and obey God, we please God. We direct our lives to God by aiming our arrows to hit God's target.

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess our faith. Together, recite the Creed.

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

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

For the sick, we pray, 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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