



# DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

## Children's Liturgy of the Word

Thirty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A .....	2
Theme: Thanking God for our gifts .....	2
Summary .....	2
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

# Thirty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A

## Theme: Thanking God for our gifts

### Summary

- † Listen to the Gospel closely because you hear the title "Teacher."
- † Be a model for the children who notice everything you do.
- † Keep focused on Jesus as teacher.

### Objectives

- † Guide the children to know that Jesus teaches through the Church.
- † Help the children connect to their Catholic faith and the teachings of Jesus.
- † Jesus wants us to be humble and use our gifts for God and one another.

### Leader's Preparation:

- † Pray the Lectionary readings.
- † Read the background.
- † Reflect upon God as our ultimate ruler.
- † Thank God for your gifts.

### Environment and Materials

- † Two screened adult leaders.
- † Liturgical space.
- † Candle, table, liturgical colours, and any other visual aids.
- † Bookmark the readings in the Bible.
- † Place a Bible in a prominent location for the children to see when they enter the space.
- † Prepare any hymns that the children will sing as they gather in the space.
- † 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

#### **Malachi 1:8-10**

- † Malachi is a Hebrew phrase meaning "my messenger."
- † God's messenger calls the people back to the pure love of God.
- † Malachi criticizes the rulers and religious leaders who failed to lead them.
- † Malachi indicts the priests who offered blemished sacrifices, disregarding Moses's law and dishonouring God.
- † Malachi foresees a day when people will offer true sacrifice to God (the Church sees this as the sacrifice of the Mass).

## Matthew 23:1-12

- † Jesus reminds the Pharisees that their teaching authority is from "Moses" ("Peter" is a similar term for Church authority).
- † He warns his disciples not to follow their example because they are hypocrites.
- † They have laid heavy burdens on the people with their strict interpretation of the law.
- † Jesus discourages his disciples from imitating those who competed for places of honour at social functions and took titles they did not deserve.
- † Jesus wants the Pharisees to use the gifts God gave them for others.

### Prayer Leader Reflection Questions

- † How do you avoid partiality?
- † How do you work to treat all people with the dignity and value given to them by God?

## 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, God gives us gifts and wants us to use them for others. Take to heart this teaching of the Lord, who loves you very much.**

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. When 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. Upon arrival at the location of the celebration, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

### Welcome.

The leaders assist the children to sit, welcome them and participate in the prayer.

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 Malachi 1:8-10**

**A reading from the book of prophet Malachi.**

**This is what God says to the priests of Israel:**

**"You have turned away from my ways.  
You have led my people away  
because of the things you teach.  
You have not kept my covenant,  
and you teach only what you want to teach and not the  
whole truth.  
So I will let the people see how wrong you are, and they  
will turn away from you."**

**The prophet Malachi said to the people:**

**"We have all been created by the same God, haven't we?  
Then why are we dishonest with each other? Why do we  
break the covenant of our family and hurt one another?"**

**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.

## **GOSPEL Matthew 23:1-12**

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.

**O**ne day, Jesus said to his disciples  
and all the people who were there with them,

**"The Pharisees and teachers of the law are important people.  
They are teachers of the law of Moses.  
So do whatever they tell you.  
But don't do what they do  
because they say one thing and do something else.  
They don't do what they teach other people to do.**

**"They do everything so that people will notice them.  
They want everyone to see what they do.  
For example, when they pray,  
they wear clothes that call attention to themselves, and  
they always take places of honour  
at celebrations or in the synagogues.  
They love to have people pay special attention to them and  
to call them 'teacher.'**

**"I don't want anyone to call you 'teacher' or 'master'  
because you have only one teacher and one master—the Christ.  
The one who is greatest among you is the servant.  
If you try to make yourself important,  
you will stumble.  
But if you are humble,  
God will make you great."**

**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. Please consider the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions.

Jesus tells us today that the Pharisees, the teachers of the Law of Moses, are teaching the people correctly. The problem is that the Pharisees don't practice what they preach. They will teach people to do one thing, such as not to brag or not to show off, but they don't do these things themselves. In today's Gospel, some Pharisees held themselves above everyone else.

### **What are some things the Pharisees did that Jesus said were not good?**

[Not willing to do what you have asked others to do; showing off; putting themselves above everyone else; expecting to be told how great they are.]

Let's think about two points from today's Gospel story.

The first is how you become great or grow in holiness by serving God. We all have gifts from God. Some of us are talented at playing a musical instrument or a sport. We use them for God and others. Sharing your gifts brings joy to others. Bringing joy to others reminds people that God is with them.

### **How could a person use their gifts to serve others?**

Second, whatever your gifts, when they are recognized and used on behalf of God, in service to others, we respond to God in a way that thanks God for giving us those gifts.

It's okay if someone asks you to share your talents or if you volunteer to share them. You are not doing it to show off! If you remember that you are not doing something for yourself alone but for others, then the glory from sharing your gift goes to God.

Many people will teach us things our whole lives. When we learn those things, we take the time to thank the person who taught us and always remember that everything we have has come from God.

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess our faith. Together, sing or recite the Apostles' or Nicene Creed. Refer the children to the words of the prayer that you have displayed.

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 to the Lord. **R.**

For the gifts God gives us, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For peace in the world, 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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