



# DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

## Children's Liturgy of the Word

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

God never gives up on us. Today's Gospel emphasizes that God saves through love rather than condemnation.

In the Lectionary, Jesus refers to the serpent that Moses lifted up in the desert. To better understand this reference, read Numbers 21:4-9. Like the bronze serpent, Jesus is lifted up so that when we look to him, we may be saved from the consequences of our own sin.

John 3:16 is one of the most familiar verses in all of Scripture. It is so very profound that we often do not stop long enough to consider the depth that God went to to express God's love for us. God gave us God's own Son to make up for the consequences of sin. Jesus came into the world to save us, not to condemn us. Despite our sinfulness, God has never given up on us. It is through Jesus' sacrifice that we have the possibility of eternal salvation.

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is called Laetare Sunday. Laetare is a Latin word that originates from the entrance antiphon at Mass. The opening line is "Laetare, Jerusalem," meaning "Rejoice, O Jerusalem." The church is the new Jerusalem. The colour rose may be used as a liturgical colour today. Today is a day of joy and hope because of Jesus...and oh yes, because Easter is near.

## Objectives

- † To help children see that Jesus came into the world to forgive our sins.
- † That children see that anything is possible with God.

## Background

- † Salvation has come into the world because of the gift of God's Son.
- † The gift of Jesus is God's gift to show humanity that God's love is unsurpassable.
- † Jesus is God's love to us.
- † God knows human flaws and sinfulness.
- † Through Jesus, God makes the world worthy of salvation.
- † Jesus is the loving gift of God, who never gives up on us.
- † Today is a joyful day.

## Leader's Reflection Questions

- † 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.

# 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, go with your leaders and God, inviting us to listen to Jesus.**

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 and prepare. Begin with the Sign of the Cross. Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may say the following prayer in these or similar words.

**Loving God, you invite us to follow you. Help us to listen to your voice.  
Amen.**

Invite the children to listen to the Gospel.

## Gospel

The children stand for the Gospel. The leader proclaims it. All sign themselves on the forehead, lips and chest.

✠ **A reading from the holy Gospel, according to John**

**Children respond: Glory to you, O Lord**

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

"God loved the people 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 people. He sent him to save them!"

At the end of the Gospel, the Minister of the Word proclaims The Gospel of the Lord.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Children: 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. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions.

An excellent place to begin is the question:

### **What did you hear?**

Think about how you feel when you love someone. It's very easy to love someone who is always kind, obeys, never gets angry, and always shares.

### **Wouldn't you like to have a friend like that?**

Now, think about someone who is mean. Someone who disobeys or someone who doesn't share. Someone who gets angry and doesn't want to play.

### **Would you like a friend like that?**

We all do those things sometimes. We all choose to do wrong things sometimes.

### **Have you ever disobeyed your mom or dad?**

### **Have you ever decided not to share a toy?**

### **Have you ever said or done mean things to one of your friends?**

Jesus knows we disobey our parents, not share a toy, or even say something mean to our friends. But he wanted to tell us something important about God. God doesn't just love people who are easy to love. God also loves people who act mean or don't share. That means God loves all of us.

God wanted to give us an example of how we should behave. So, God sent us his Son Jesus. Before we disobey, try to remember that Jesus always did what God wanted him to do. Before we act mean, try to remember that Jesus was king, even to people who treated him poorly. Before you keep something to yourself and don't share, remember that Jesus shared everything he had with people who needed him. He always thought of others first.

### **Do you see how much God loves us?**

Even though we sometimes do wrong things, God wants us to change and return to God. God helped people figure out how to do that when he sent Jesus to show us how to live. God shared with us the gift of Jesus. We want to thank God and follow Jesus. Today, we continue teaching and learning all that Jesus taught us.

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith.

Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

### 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

leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. It may be necessary for the leader to repeat and paraphrase the petition and conclude it with the cue for the response: we pray. All respond to each petition by saying: Lord, hear our prayer. Sample intercessions are below.

**Leader: With joy, we offer God our needs. Our response is: Lord, hear our prayer. R./**

**Lector: For the Church, the sign of God's love in the world, that all people will be drawn in and welcomed, we pray: R./**

**Lector: For the sick, the weak and the elderly, we pray: 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.

**Lector: For forgiveness, that we may give it and receive it, we pray: R./**

**Leader: Ever loving God, you show love for your people. Send your love into our lives and those for whom we pray in faith through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

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

Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.

Readings: Lectionary Sundays and Solemnities, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Ottawa, ON, adapted for children.  
The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition (Jn 3:14–21). (1993). National Council of Churches of Christ.  
Celebrating the Lectionary for Preschool and Kindergarten Year B, Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL.  
Sunday Weekly Leader Guide, Treehaus Communications, Inc., Loveland, OH.  
Children's Liturgy of the Word, A Weekly Resource, Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL.  
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