



# DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

## Children's Liturgy of the Word FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

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 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 harm's way to Tarsus.

The Gospel develops the theme of the believing community. A vine puts out many branches, which 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 the Son of God in the use of this term and says 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.

Jesus continues to speak to the disciples through imagery they understood from their everyday experience and with symbols 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 that impedes life or comes from a source not nourished from the 'true vine.' Jesus exists to make the Father known, so the disciples of Jesus must do it. We must abide with Jesus and thus make the Father known.

## Objective

- † To help children develop their spirituality in Jesus.
- † To see Jesus as the source of faith in God.

## Background

### **Acts 9:26-31**

The passage from Acts demonstrates the power of unity in bringing about incredible growth and transformation. Once a persecutor and part of the Pharisee group, Paul experienced a profound conversion to Christianity. However, upon his return to Jerusalem, the members of the Church were hesitant to trust him. Through the intervention of Barnabas, the community came to accept Paul. Barnabas' kindness and forgiveness paved the way for unity in the early Church, which, despite facing controversy, remained one body and grew in numbers. Paul returned to Jerusalem six times and became equal to the other apostles, launching his extraordinary ministry.

### **Psalm 22:26-27, 28, 30, 31-32**

The Psalm response that proclaims, "I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people" holds a beautiful meaning. It reminds us of our responsibility to praise the Lord through our actions and words while highlighting the significance of being part of God's community. Together, we can support, motivate, and uplift one another in our faith journey.

### **1 John 3:18-24**

As followers of Christ, we are called to more than just words - we must live out our beliefs. Love for one another is not just a statement but a way of life. By holding onto the commandment to believe in Jesus and love one another, we remain connected to Christ. The Holy Spirit guides us in this, and we can have confidence in our faith through God's love. Even in moments of doubt, we can trust that God forgives us and hears our prayers. John's closing words remind us to stay strong in our faith and to trust in God's love.

### **John 15:1-8**

This beautiful passage is a powerful message about how the Church is united and connected through Jesus. Jesus is the vine that gives us life and strength. We can't do anything without Him. But if we stay connected to Him, we will produce abundant fruit in our lives. We are all connected, like veins and arteries in our body, and share the same lifeblood. Following Jesus's teachings, we can confidently ask for what we need and glorify God. As members of the Church, we focus on the community's needs rather than our desires. Let us remember to stay connected to Jesus, the source of life, and produce abundant fruit in our lives.

## Leader's Reflection Questions

- † Looking back on those difficult or "pruning" moments of your life, how have they helped you or your parish community to grow?
- † What keeps the life of your family or community together, flourishing, and capable of bearing fruit?

## 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, in today's Gospel, Jesus teaches his disciples that God calls them to remain in him, attached to him as branches are to a vine. When branches stay connected to the vine, they produce fruit. We send you forth to discover those ways you can produce fruit.

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.

**Lord Jesus,**

**Bless us with open minds and hearts so that we will hear your message.**

**Amen.**

Invite the children to listen to the readings.

## First Reading

**A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.**

**When Saul came to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples; they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described how on the road he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus Saul had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus.**

**So Saul went in and out among them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. He spoke and argued with the Hellenists, but they were attempting to kill him. When the believers learned of it, they brought Saul to Caesarea and sent him to Tarsus.**

**Meanwhile, the churches had peace and were built up while living in awe of the Lord and in the Holy Spirit. The Church increased in numbers.**

**The word of the Lord.**

*At the end of the reading, the Minister of the Word proclaims, "The word of the Lord."*

**Children: Thanks be to God.**

*A period of silence is observed after the reading.*

## Responsorial Psalm

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

**My vows I will pay before those who fear him.**

**The poor shall eat and be satisfied;**

**those who seek him shall praise the Lord.**

**May your hearts live forever. R.**

**All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord;**

**and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.**

**To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;**

**before him shall bow all who go down to the dust. R.**

**I shall live for him, and posterity will serve him.**

**Future generations will be told about the Lord**

**and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,**

**saying that he has done it. R.**

## Second Reading

**A reading from the first letter of John.**

**Little children, let us love,  
not in word or speech but in truth and action.  
And by this, we will know that we are from the truth  
and will reassure our hearts before him  
whenever our hearts condemn us;  
for God is greater than our hearts,  
and God knows everything.**

**Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us,  
we have boldness before God;  
and we receive from him whatever we ask,  
because we obey his commandments and do what pleases God.**

**And this is God's commandment,  
that we should believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one  
another, just as he has commanded us.**

**All who obey his commandments abide in him,  
and he abides in them.**

**And by this, we know that he abides in us,  
by the Spirit that he has given us.**

**The word of the Lord.**

*At the end of the reading, the Minister of the Word proclaims, "The word of the Lord."*

**Children: Thanks be to God.**

*A period of silence is observed after the reading.*

## 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 Luke.**

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

**Jesus said to his disciples:**

**"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.**

**"Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit because apart from me, you can do nothing.**

**"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."**

**The gospel of the Lord.**

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

**The Gospel of the Lord.**

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

## 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?**

Allow each child to respond to hearing the Word of God in their own words. Then, begin a general discussion, building on these responses, using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

**Bring a living vine-like plant (or similar) for the children to focus on during this reflection.**

We have many names for Jesus.

**Do you remember the name Jesus gave for himself last week?** *Good Shepherd*

**What are some other names for Jesus?**

Today, Jesus calls himself by another name: the True Vine.

**Why do you think that is a good name for Jesus?**

Look at this plant.

**What do you notice about this plant?**

**Do you see the branches are connected?**

Each part gets its food and water from the soil and through its roots. The parts stay healthy and strong when connected to the other parts. Come and take a closer look at this plant. It is hard to tell one part from the other.

**Where do you see yourself on the vine?**

**What would happen if we cut a piece?** *It dies because it doesn't get food.*

We stay connected to God to remain strong and act like a child of God. Jesus is connected to God, and we are connected to Jesus and all the people who believe in him. Jesus teaches us this in a straightforward, important way. He teaches by saying the same word over and over again. Listen as I reread part of this Gospel:

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

**Which word do you hear over and over?** *The word abide.*

**What does it mean to abide?** *Joined to Jesus.*

Jesus says to abide seven times! That's how important this message is: to abide in him. When we are joined to God and Jesus, we share God's life and the life of everyone connected on the vine.



**How can we abide in Jesus?** We should pray, listen to our parents/teachers, attend church, and be kind.

Jesus says if we abide with him and do his work, we will "produce lots of fruit.". It sounds funny, but it is also very important. He says Jesus isn't talking about real fruit, like bananas and grapes. He's talking about all the good things we do to help others.

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 believe.

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

All: We believe.

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

All: We 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: We take confidence from God's word in the readings and ask for our needs. Our response is: R./**

**Lector: For the Church, that it will be a place where people grow, we pray: R./**

**Lector: That people who have power over others will have compassion grow in their hearts, we pray: R./**

**Lector: That we will be of the growing part of the Lord's vine, we pray: R./**

**Lector: For the sick, the hungry and those who are lonely, we pray: R./**

The leader may invite other intercessions from the children.

**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.**

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.