



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

Children's Liturgy of the Word

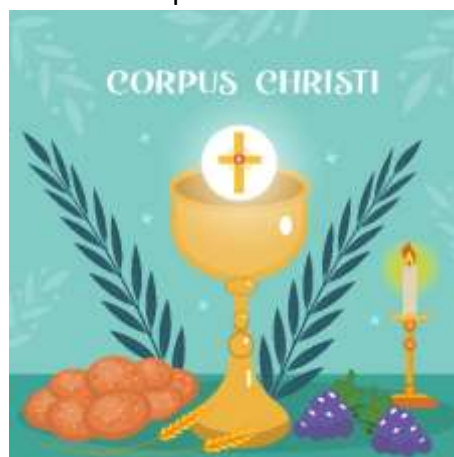
THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST (CORPUS CHRISTI)

The focus of the readings is on the covenant. Each reading stresses the importance of blood as the life force, and the image of life gives meaning to sharing the cup as a symbol of renewing the life-giving covenant.

Blood is identified with life. Creatures who have blood cannot live without it. We receive life from our families. Jesus connected eternal life through the Eucharist at the Last Supper. We encounter Jesus at every Mass through the Eucharist.

The first reading describes Moses' sealing of the first covenant, while in the Gospel, Jesus speaks of the new covenant sealed in his blood. The first covenant expressed the personal and sacred commitment between God and the people of Israel. To the Hebrew mind, blood was the source and symbol of life. The blood, representing God, is poured on the altar and the people.

In the Gospel, Jesus prepares to eat a last meal with his friends. He knows that the final moments are upon him. Careful preparations are made for the meal; it must be celebrated in peace to savour the gift. The gift is a surprise. Jesus gives himself. The friendship Jesus has had with his followers is about to end. That fellowship will be renewed in full only in the kingdom of God.



Objective

- † Introduce children to the Eucharist.
- † Eucharist is life.
- † Help children learn that Catholics live the Eucharistic.

Background

Mark's Gospel describes the Last Supper, during which Jesus communicated the Eucharistic gift to the disciples. The gift of divine life enters us each time we receive the Eucharist. Christ becomes our life, satisfying our hunger and thirst. When we share the bread and wine, we remember Jesus and become the very body and blood of Christ. Reflect on how you are "bread" for others and how others are "bread" for you.

Exodus 24:3-8 In the Sinai desert, the people connected with God, seeing God as the one who heard their cries, led them out of Egypt and provided food and water. They considered themselves chosen by the Lord and agreed to follow God's Word. Moses solidified the agreement with a sacrifice, symbolizing the bond by sprinkling blood on the altar and the people.

Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16, 17-18 This hymn of thanksgiving is sung by someone who was rescued from the danger of death by God. The phrase "cup of salvation" may have initially been part of a sacrifice and leads us to meditate on our communion with the blood of Christ. Praying this psalm helps us share in the experience of Israel in the desert, giving thanks for deliverance and promising to be faithful and witness.

Hebrews 9:11-15 The Epistle to the Hebrews focuses on the significance of Christ as the definitive high priest whose sacrifice brings deliverance from transgressions. Jesus is presented as the one who established a New Covenant that will never end.

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26 Mark's account of the Last Supper is surprising. It shows how the disciples resisted understanding Jesus' impending suffering and the idea of participating in his Passover. Jesus identified his body with the bread and his blood with the cup, making a shocking theological statement. He invited the disciples to take the cup, shared it with them, and explained its meaning, ushering them into the new covenant.

Leader's Reflection Questions

- † How do you understand the Eucharist?
- † How do you live the Eucharist?

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, Jesus makes us a promise. We call it a Covenant. Jesus is always with us, and we thank Jesus for his love. Go with your leaders to learn about the Covenant of 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 in sitting and preparing. **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.

O God,

Lord God, send the Holy Spirit to help us listen to your Word about the Covenant Jesus made with us through the Eucharist.

Amen.

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, the Gospel is required.

First Reading

A reading from the book of Exodus.

Moses came and told the people
all of God's commandments;
and the people answered,
"All that God has said, we will do."

Moses rose early in the morning,
and built an altar at the foot of the mountain,
and set up twelve pillars,
for the twelve tribes of Israel.

He sent young men,
who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed oxen
as offerings to the Lord.

Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins,
and half of the blood he dashed against the altar.
Then he took the book of the covenant,
and read it to the people;
and they said,
"All that the Lord has spoken we will do,
and we will be obedient."

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 take the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord.

What shall I return to the Lord
for all his bounty to me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord. **R.**

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones.
O Lord, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the child of your serving girl.
You have loosed my bonds. **R.**

I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice
and call on the name of the Lord.
I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people. **R.**

Second Reading

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Hebrews.

Christ came as our high priest.
He passed through a perfect tent, not made with human hands.
He entered into the Holy Place,
not with the blood of goats and calves,
but with his own blood, obtaining eternal redemption.
For if the blood of goats and bulls,
with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer,
sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified,
how much more will the blood of Christ,
purify our conscience from dead works
to worship the living God!
For this reason, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant,
so that those who are called
may receive the promised eternal life.

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, which the leader proclaims. They sign themselves on the forehead, lips, and chest.

✠ A reading from the holy Gospel, according to Mark.

Children respond: Glory to you, O Lord.

On the first day of Unleavened Bread,¹
the disciples said to Jesus,
"Go into the city,
and say to the owner of the house,
He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready.
Make preparations for us there."

So the disciples went to the city,
and they prepared the Passover meal.
While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread,
and after blessing it, he broke it,
gave it to them and said,
"Take; this is my body."

Then he took a cup,
and after giving thanks, he gave it to them,
and all of them drank from it.

He said to them,
"This is my blood of the covenant,
which is poured out for many."

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.

¹ Originally an agricultural. The eating of unleavened bread at this festival was also linked to the tradition of Israel's exodus from Egypt when the Israelites' haste in fleeing Pharaoh did not allow them time to wait for the dough to rise.

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 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.

Do you like bread? Bread comes in different sizes, shapes and textures.

What are different kinds of bread?

Bread is a food that people all over the world eat. For many people, bread is the most important part of their meals. Bread helps us live and grow.

In today's Gospel, Jesus called himself "bread." **What could this mean?**

Do you know how, at Mass, everyone goes up to the altar to receive the Eucharist?

The word Eucharist means "thanksgiving."

Let's say the word Eucharist together: "Eucharist."

We thank God and then receive Jesus, who becomes a part of us. Jesus gives us the strength to resist doing bad things and helps us have a loving and caring attitude toward others. Receiving the Eucharist strengthens us in Christ. It's like one big family sharing a meal together. We're all part of one big Christian family in the Church.

Do you know what the Last Supper² is?

We remember what Jesus does for us each time we receive the Eucharist. Each Sunday, we are invited to share the Eucharist meal with us.

Just like how regular bread helps keep our bodies strong and healthy, Jesus, who is the Bread of Life, helps us live and grow as well. Our entire selves grow: our bodies, our minds, our emotions, and our souls. That's why Jesus is the most important source of our spiritual life and growth. The life that Jesus gives us isn't just for this earth. Jesus gives us heavenly life—the life that will never end. Through the precious gift of the Eucharist, we are able to share in that everlasting life. One day, when you're older, you will receive Jesus in this way, too. Until then, we can celebrate together at Mass and pray that God will help you prepare for your First Communion.

Let's take a few minutes to sit here silently and thank Jesus for something that may be on our hearts.

² The meal Christ and His disciples held on the eve of His Passion at which He instituted the Holy Eucharist.

Alternative Reflection

We celebrate the solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. We know that the body and blood of Jesus were given to us as a gift and covenant.

There's a story told of a young boy who refused to go to school. His mother took him to school, but he cried and protested and ran back home immediately after she left. She brought him back to school, and this played out again and again and again. It continued for several days. He refused to stay in school. His parents tried to reason with him, arguing that he, like all children, must now go to school. They were unsuccessful. His parents then tried the age-old trick of applying an appropriate combination of bribes and threats. This, too, had no effect.

Finally, in desperation they went to their Priest and explained the situation to him. For his part, the Priest said: "If the boy won't listen, bring him to me." They brought him into the Church. The Priest did not say a word. He picked up the boy and held him to his heart for a long time. Then, still without a word, he set him down.

What words couldn't accomplish, a silent embrace did. The boy not only began willingly to go to school, he became a successful surgeon.

That story wonderfully expresses how the Eucharist works. In it, God physically embraces us. Indeed, that is what all sacraments are: God's physical embrace. Words, as we know, have relative power. In critical situations, they often fail us. When this happens, we have still another language, the language of ritual. The most ancient and primal ritual of all is the ritual of physical embrace. It can say and do what words cannot.

For most of his ministry, Jesus used words. He tried to bring God's consolation, challenge, and strength through words. His words, like all words, had a certain power. Indeed, his words stirred hearts, healed people, and affected conversions. But at a time, powerful though they were, they too became inadequate. Something more was needed.

So, the night before his death, having exhausted what he could do with words, Jesus went beyond them. He gave us the Eucharist, his physical embrace, his kiss, an act which he holds us to his heart.

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: I believe.

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

All: I believe.

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

All: I 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 trust in our hearts, we call upon our loving God for our needs: **R./**

Lector: For the Church, that we cherish each member, we pray: **R./**

Lector: For peace in the world, we pray: **R./**

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

The leader may invite other intercessions from the children.

Leader: God our Hope and Peace, gather to yourself all of those for whom we pray.
Through Jesus 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.

Text: New Revised Standard Version of the Bible © National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCC).
Adapted by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Adaptations © 2009, NCCC. All rights reserved.
Adapted for Children.

Image: Shutterstock, Used with permission, license number 291099467

Prepared by the Diocese of Hamilton, Liturgy Office, © 2024



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON