



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

Children's Liturgy of the Word ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

The readings today seem to suggest that God is not winning. However, they encourage trust in the God of history who works in human hearts even when the result is unclear. Ezekiel's parable, written during the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem, presents a vision of hope. In the Second Reading, Paul writes from a place of weakness, speaking of hope and confidence despite challenging circumstances and an uncertain future.

Jesus's parables about the Kingdom of God turned the world upside down. The people who heard them were amazed at how being part of God's Kingdom changes our perspective. These parables are not simply moral stories; they have deep and expansive meanings that children should be encouraged to explore.

The Gospel passage emphasizes that the kingdom grows in people's hearts in God's way, regardless of our awareness. The mention of birds finding shelter in the branches of the mustard tree represents all nations finding a place in the kingdom. The seed in the parable does not rely on constant attention to grow; it can grow on its own. Whenever we sow the seed of God's love or God's Word, God will continue the work of growth using the circumstances of that person's experience.

Objective

- † Help children see that the reign of God is already present among us.
- † Show the children that God is present in Jesus and his followers.

Background

Ezekiel 17:22-24 During hard times, it may be difficult to see God's hand. When the Israelites turned to Egypt for salvation instead of God, they faced further destruction. Ezekiel reminded them of God's promise never to abandon them. Ezekiel urged the Israelites to practice faithfulness and trust in God.

Psalms 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16 The responsorial psalm promises long life and uses the symbolic connection of palm and cedar trees to royalty to express longevity, loyalty, and strength. The psalm invites us to join our voices in thanksgiving to God and highlights the importance of practicing justice and bearing fruits like these trees, even in old age.

2 Corinthians 5:6-10 St. Paul's image of being at home in the body and away from the Lord acknowledges that we are not entirely united to Christ at the moment. Only death will bring us to the fullness of that union and at home with the Lord. During their earthly time, believers are to walk in faith. Faith acknowledges our belief here and now even though we do not see it. Faith allows us, like the Israelites, to stay rooted in our belief in God and the covenant fulfilled in his Son, Jesus Christ. Paul says all will be judged according to the good or evil they have done. Followers of Christ are urged to live well, with courage and confidence, so that they will live with Christ for eternity.

Mark 4:26-34 Jesus often used everyday experiences to explain his teachings about the kingdom of God. The kingdom is like a small seed that grows into a large tree, providing shade and shelter. We are called to demonstrate this kingdom through our actions, treating each other with justice, peace, and right relationships. The kingdom of God is not just a place but a way of being and following God's way.

Leader's Reflection Questions

- † When do you show patience watching for God's work in the world?
- † When do you need more patience?
- † How might you cultivate more patience?

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, candle, mustard seeds, a tray of soil, and water.

(Mustard seed is available from a Garden Centre. You may wish to provide a container to plant some mustard seeds so the children can see them sprout in later weeks – or bring some that are sprouted ahead of time).



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, today you will hear the kingdom of God compared to a mustard seed. The mustard seed is the tiniest of seeds, but when planted, it grows into a very large plant. When you hear the story, think about how Jesus can sow good things in your heart. Go in peace.

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,

God, send the Holy Spirit to help us know you are always present.

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 Ezekiel.

The Lord God said:

"I will cut a tender twig from the very top of a cedar tree and plant it on the peak of a tall mountain.

I will plant it on the highest mountain in Israel.

It will grow into a beautiful and useful cedar tree.

All kinds of birds will find shelter under it and shade in its branches.

Every tree in the forest will know that I, the Lord, bring down tall trees and make short trees grow tall.

I dry up green trees and make dried trees turn green again.

I, the Lord, have spoken!

And I will keep my word."

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. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

It is wonderful to be grateful and to sing your praises, Lord Most High!

It is wonderful each morning to tell about your love and at night to announce how faithful you are. **R**

Good people will prosper like palm trees, and they will grow strong like the cedars of Lebanon. They will take root in your house, Lord God, and they will do well. **R**

Second Reading

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

Brothers and sisters:

Always be cheerful!

As long as we are in these bodies,
we are away from the Lord.

But we live by faith, not by what we see.

We should be cheerful

because we would rather leave these bodies and be
at home with the Lord.

But whether we are at home with the Lord or away
from him, we still do our best to please him.

After all, Christ will judge each of us
for the good or the bad that we do
while living in these bodies.

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.

Jesus said: "What is God's Kingdom like?

What story can I use to explain it?

It is like what happens when a mustard seed
is planted in the ground.

It is the smallest seed in the world.

But once it is planted,
it grows larger than any garden plant.

It even puts out branches big enough for birds to rest in its shade."

Jesus used many other stories when he spoke to people,
and he taught them as much as they could understand.

But when he was alone with his disciples,
he explained everything to them.

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 the Word of God in their own words. Then, begin a general discussion, building on their responses, using prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

Jesus often spoke about the Kingdom of God when he taught people on earth. God's Kingdom is not like any kingdom on earth, and God is not like any other king.

Do you know what a kingdom is?

What does it look like?

Jesus tried to talk about God's Kingdom using words and ideas that people would understand.

In today's Gospel story, Jesus compares God's Kingdom to a mustard seed. A mustard seed is very small. Some seeds are no bigger than the point of a pin. When the mustard seed is planted in the ground, it grows bigger than most bushes or trees. So, like the mustard seed, God's Kingdom starts very small but ends up very big. Once the tree is grown, it has many branches. Jesus tells us that birds come and make their home in the tree. Many different birds come to the tree.

What do the birds do when they find a home in the tree?

Do they have to work hard? Do they get along with other birds?

[Jesus says they come to the tree to "rest in its shade."]

Have you ever sat under a tree and been shaded by its branches?

How do you feel when you are there? Rested, peaceful, happy, quiet?

What does that teach us about God's Kingdom?

It is a place where everyone who is part of it is happy and peaceful. They all get along. They don't argue. It is a quiet place where they can rest.

It is a place they might never want to leave. The Gospel tells us that Jesus told many other stories to teach us about God's Kingdom. Jesus tried to use simple, everyday images to compare them to God's Kingdom. And the hope is that even people as young as you can begin to understand!

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: Let us pray to God with 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 of Life, hear your children's prayers 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.



The Sign of the Cross

Each Mass begins with the Sign of the Cross. The priest says, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," and the people answer, "Amen." Meanwhile, all make the traditional gesture in accompaniment. Usually, they use their right hand to touch their forehead, chest and left and right shoulders while the names of the Trinity are pronounced. Some people lower their heads or close their eyes, but others look straight ahead to draw inspiration from the faith of the entire community.

The Sign of the Cross is a popular way to begin and conclude prayer. For example, a mealtime blessing often opens and closes with it. It verbally proclaims our faith in the Holy Trinity and announces our intentions to do and say all things in the name of God.

During Mass, the priest traces a cross in the air with his right hand raised, fingers extended, and palm facing his left. He positions his hand in the direction of people or things he blesses. He does this, for example, after putting incense on burning coals while blessing the deacon before he reads the Gospel, calling down the Spirit over the bread and wine during the Eucharistic Prayer, and blessing the people just before the Dismissal. His first and last words at Mass are the Sign of the Cross.

Lectionary for Masses with Children, Catholic Book Publishing Co, New York, NY, 1993.

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Liturgy adapted for Children.

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