



# DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

## Children's Liturgy of the Word SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Today's readings focus on Jesus as the Good Shepherd, leading people to God regardless of race or belief. In Israel, the roles of shepherd and ruler were closely connected, as the shepherd was responsible for the needs of the flock, just as the king was responsible for the needs of the people. Jeremiah wrote during the final years of King Zedekiah, shortly before the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 587 BC. He criticizes the shepherds, the last kings of Judah, for leading their flock astray and turning them away from God. As the people faced exile, the Lord promised to bring them back and provide them with good and faithful rulers.

The Gospel is connected to last week when the twelve were sent out on their mission. Jesus is now responding to their tiredness and need for a break. They went to a lonely place, only to find it crowded. This often happens to people in caring and protective roles. Stories like this one in Jesus' ministry reassure us that God never turns any of us away. This reality needs to be balanced with the need to care for ourselves as caregivers.

God cares for everyone, just like a good shepherd cares for his flock. Jesus's followers are encouraged to follow his example by feeding the hungry, sharing the Gospel with those in need of hope, and caring for those searching for a connection with God. Jesus has a magnetic effect on people, drawing everyone who hears about him to himself.

God's promise to the people through Jeremiah, his prophet, is for a gentle leader who will guide and shepherd them. When Jesus comes, he is a shepherd for the poor, the lost and the outcasts.

### Objective

- † To elevate the image of the Shepherd and contemplate the role of the Lord, our God, in our lives.
- † To emphasize the importance of community, the Lord's flock, in the lives of Christians.

### Images from the Readings

- † Rest
- † Large crowd
- † Live in peace
- † Sheep without a shepherd
- † The Lord is our protector

## Background

**Jeremiah 23:1-6** The word "shepherd" in Hebrew has a common root with the verb "to rule." In the past, kings were known as shepherds because their main duty was to care for everyone and rule with fairness. Jeremiah criticizes the kings for not taking care of God's people, which leads to the exile of the people from their land. Jeremiah warns the kings that God will treat them as they treat the people. God will take on the role of the king. Jeremiah hopes that one day God will "raise a righteous shoot to David." This king would rule wisely and justly and bring about goodness in the land. Under this "righteous shoot," peace, security, and right relationships would be abundant, and he would be called "the Lord, our justice." Christians believe that this "righteous shoot to David" is Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who knows and cares for us.

**Psalms 23** describes the Lord as a caring shepherd, providing for and protecting the sheep. It emphasizes God's unfailing love and kindness, assuring a lasting relationship with Him. Trusting in God will meet all our needs. For Christians, Jesus is the Good Shepherd who calls us to care for others.

**Ephesians 2:13-18** In the letter to the Ephesians, the author addresses the division between early followers of Christ, specifically between Jewish and Gentile believers. The letter emphasizes that Christ's sacrifice has united all people, breaking down the barriers between them.

**Mark 6:30-34** After successfully preaching and healing, Jesus tells his apostles to rest in a deserted place away from the always-present crowd. They set out in a boat to find a quiet place, but the crowd notices where they are heading and gets there ahead of them. Jesus, feeling sorry for the people who are like sheep without a shepherd, teaches them many things. This story is meant to show that Jesus puts others' needs before his own. This fulfills the hope for a true shepherd, as described by the prophet Jeremiah.

## Leader's Reflection Questions

- † Why did Jesus want to find a quiet, peaceful spot? Do you ever have trouble finding some peace or getting away by yourself? What do you do?
- † How does God call you to shepherd?

## Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, picture of a flock of sheep.



## 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:** (in these or similar words)

**My dear children, today you will hear that Jesus is your Shepherd. Listen to how you can hear his voice and how he teaches us. 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,**

**Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with your presence.**

**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 the prophet Jeremiah.**

I, the Lord, will bring the rest of my people back from the lands where I have scattered them. I will bring them home, and they will grow into a mighty nation. I will choose leaders who will take care of them. Every one of my people will be there, and they will never again be frightened or terrified. I, the Lord, have spoken!

I promise that the time will come when I will choose a king from the family of David. He will be wise and will rule the land with justice and fairness. As long as he is king, Judah will be safe, and Israel will live in peace. The name of this king will be, "The Lord is our Protector!"

### **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.** The Lord is my Shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

**Or** Alleluia.

You, Lord, are my shepherd.

I will never be in need.

You let me rest in fields of green grass.

You lead me to peaceful water streams and refresh my life. **R**

You are true to your name,

and you lead me along the right paths.

I may walk through valleys as dark as death, but I won't be afraid.

You are with me; your shepherd's rod and staff make me feel safe. **R**

Your kindness and love

will always be with me

every day of my life,

And I will live forever in your house, O Lord. **R**

## Second Reading

### **A reading from the second letter of Paul to the Ephesians.**

Now, in Christ Jesus  
you who once were far off have been brought near  
by the blood of Christ.  
For he is our peace;  
in his flesh, he has made both Jews and Gentiles into one  
and has broken down the dividing wall,  
that is the hostility between us.  
He has abolished the law with its commandments and  
ordinances that he might create in himself  
one new humanity in place of the two, thus making  
peace,  
and might reconcile both groups to God in one body  
through the cross,  
thus putting to death that hostility through it.  
So Christ Jesus came and proclaimed peace to you who  
were far off and peace to those who were near;  
for through him, both of us have access in one Spirit to  
the Father.

### **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.

After the apostles returned to Jesus, they told him everything they had done and taught. But so many people were coming and going that Jesus and the apostles did not even have a chance to eat.

Then Jesus said: "Let's go to a place where we can be alone and get some rest." They left in a boat for a place where they could be alone. But many people saw them leave and figured out where they were going. So people from every town ran on ahead and got there first.

When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw a large crowd that looked like sheep without a shepherd. He felt sorry for the people and started teaching them many things.

**Children respond: Glory to you, O 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 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.

The disciples of Jesus had been travelling around, spreading the word about God. Back then, they had to walk to all the different towns and villages because there were no cars, trains, buses, or even bicycles. When they returned from their travels, they gave Jesus a report on everything they had accomplished.

**How do you think they were feeling after all the walking, teaching, and healing the disciples had been doing?** [tired, hungry, wanted to sleep]

The Gospel says that none of them even got to grab a bite to eat because so many people were coming and going. So Jesus said, "Let's get out of here and find a quiet spot to chill." They hopped on a boat to sail to a more peaceful place, but guess what? People followed them! They couldn't catch a break anywhere to relax.

**Do you think Jesus got mad?**

No. Jesus loved and took care of the people because they seemed lost and in need of guidance, like sheep without a shepherd. Just like Jesus loved the people who came to him, he loves you, too. He wants you to know good things, get to know him, and learn the best ways to live. Jesus wants you to get to know him as your Good Shepherd. Jesus didn't run from the people. He didn't send them away. Instead, he started to teach them about God.

**Can you imagine being so tired and hungry but still having the energy to help someone?**

Love, kindness, and understanding are the only emotions that would make people sacrifice some of their food, sleep, or time for another person. That's how much Jesus cares for 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:** 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 hopeful hearts, let us call upon God for our needs: **R.**

**Lector:** For the Church, where outsiders are welcomed, we pray: **R.**

**Lector:** For leaders everywhere, may they govern all people with generous hearts, we pray: **R.**

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

**Lector:** For those who have died, we pray: **R.**

The leader may invite other intercessions from the children.

**Leader:** 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.



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## Priest

**THE PRIEST** is the minister who offers the sacrifice of the Mass in the person of Christ (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 93). He stands at the head of the assembly:

**presides by this fact over the faithful people gathered here and now, presides over their prayer, proclaims to them the message of salvation, associates the people with himself in the offering of sacrifice through Christ in the Holy Spirit to God the Father, and gives his brothers and sisters the Bread of eternal life and partakes of it with them (93).**

Christ is the one high priest. When we celebrate Mass, we participate in his one sacrifice. The local priest in our churches leads the people in the person of Christ.

In most parishes, the priest leads the people in many other ways, too. He guides their spiritual lives. He meets with them on parish business. He represents them to the broader community. At Mass, he presides over their prayer.

By preparing and delivering the homily, the priest proclaims salvation to his people. By praying with them at the Mass, he unites the entire body of believers before God. At Communion, he partakes of the Eucharist and shares it with others.

The priest has many responsibilities apart from the Mass, but leading the prayers at the Eucharist is his single most important role. For his ministry at the altar to be authentic, the priest must live his entire life in faithfulness to the Gospel. “[W]hen he celebrates the Eucharist, he must serve God and the people with dignity and humility, and by his bearing and by the way he pronounces the divine words he must convey to the faithful the living presence of Christ” (93).

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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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