



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

Children's Liturgy of the Word

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Our focus today is the Eucharist. The readings of the past three Sundays have led us to this.

In our first reading, wisdom (an image of God) builds her house and invites all to come: "eat my bread, drink my wine ... walk in my ways and choose real life." In the Gospel, Jesus invites us to eat and drink his body and blood and have real life.

In both of these readings, we want to focus not so much on the physical (bread/body, wine/blood) but on its meaning—sharing in the very life of God. In sharing the meal, we have a real life because Jesus says, "I am living in you, and you are living in me."

Jesus offers himself totally – nothing held back — as the food that nourishes for life and beyond. The people to whom he speaks do not understand. When we share the "body of Christ," we share the Person; when we share the "blood of Christ," we share the life of Christ. We travel as did the chosen people of old, on a journey to the promised land, sustained by the food we find along the way. The Eucharist is our manna in the wilderness. Through it, we receive a share in the life of God directly from God's hand.

Sometimes, we need help understanding and accepting the teachings of Jesus.

Background

Proverbs 9:1-6 In the Old Testament, divine Wisdom is often represented as a woman (the word 'wisdom' is feminine in Greek and Hebrew) inviting all willing to come to her banquet. The only qualification is to be simple and open to learning, those whom Jesus in the gospel will call 'meek and humble of heart.' Especially after the Exile in Babylon, the Israelites realized they could not rely on their strength and wisdom but must turn to God in humility and confidence. Such lowliness is a feature of the post-exilic prophets and their spirituality.

Ephesians 5:15-20 Singing is a natural expression of joy and united harmony, which has always occurred in Christianity from the very beginning, to express the joy and gratitude of Christians in the Lord. This instruction in the letter to the Ephesians only continues and encourages the tradition.

John 6:51-58 This is the last reading from the Bread of Life discourse. It moves from seeing Christ as the Wisdom of God, who is accepted and believed, to the sacrament of eating the bread of life. Receiving the flesh and blood of Christ is not a magical rite. The discourse directs us to see the life Jesus gives us by both "believing" and "eating," i.e. a believing reception of the sacrament. For the Christian who receives the Eucharist, Jesus remains in us, and we remain in him. The bread and wine don't last forever, but the life we receive in the meal is eternal. Eucharist is not a meal for a few; it is not just about our salvation. It is meant to empower all Christians to go into the world with the life of Christ we have received. What we celebrate here at the table is what we are to put into practice. We ask for the gift of wisdom to know how to do that in our specific circumstances. The Eucharist unites us with Christ, and with him and the wisdom he gives us, we will find ways to feed the hunger of God's people.

Leaders Reflections Questions:

- † What do you draw life from?
- † What is the source of your nourishment?
- † What kind of life is Jesus offering you? Is it for now or the future?
- † Are there ways you can bring life and nourishment to others this week?

Suggested Focus

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a loaf of bread.

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, go with your leaders to listen to the Wisdom 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,

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 first book of Proverbs.

Wisdom has built her house,
she has hewn her seven pillars.
She has slaughtered her animals,
she has mixed her wine,
she has also set her table.
She has sent out her servant girls,
she calls from the highest places in the town,
"You that are simple, turn in here!"
To those without sense she says,
"Come, eat of my bread
and drink of the wine I have mixed.
Lay aside immaturity, and live,
and walk in the way of insight."

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

The word of the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

Responsorial Psalm

R. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
let the humble hear and be glad. **R.**

O fear the Lord, you his holy ones,
for those who fear him have no want.
The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek the Lord lack no good
thing. **R.**

Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.
Which of you desires life,
and covets many days to enjoy good? **R.**

Keep your tongue from evil,
and your lips from speaking deceit.
Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it. **R.**



Second Reading

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

Brothers and sisters,
be careful how you live,
not as unwise people but as wise,
making the most of the time,
because the days are evil.
So do not be foolish,
but understand what the will of the Lord is.
Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery;
but be filled with the Spirit,
as you sing psalms and hymns
and spiritual songs among yourselves,
singing and making music to the Lord in your hearts,
giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name
of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

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. They sign themselves on the forehead, lips, and chest.

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

Jesus said to the people:

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever;

and the bread that I will give is my flesh
for the life of the world.

The people then disputed among themselves, saying,

"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

So Jesus said to them,

"Very truly, I tell you,

unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have
no life in you.

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will
raise them up on the last day;

for my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.

"Just as the living Father sent me,

and I live because of the Father,

so whoever eats me will live because of me.

This is the bread that came down from heaven,

not like your ancestors ate, and they died.

But the one who eats this bread will live forever."

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.

Over the last few weeks, we have discussed Jesus telling his followers about feeding their souls and about God. These readings have been about Jesus, who is the Bread of Life. Like the manna that God sent to feed the people in the desert, Jesus is sent to us as bread from heaven to feed our souls.

Today, we heard Jesus say that eternal life in heaven happens when we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man. Unlike the manna in the desert, however, the bread that is Jesus brings us eternal life. When Jesus told his followers that they must eat of his Body and drink of his Blood, Jesus was talking about the Holy Eucharist. In the Eucharist, we use bread and wine that become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, even though it still looks like bread and wine. Jesus allowed himself to be the final sacrifice so that all sins might be forgiven.

During the time of Jesus, Jewish people brought animals to the Temple to be sacrificed to God. At Passover, they would sacrifice a lamb and eat its meat. Jesus is often referred to as "the Lamb of God" because of this. Before his death, Jesus told his disciples to remember him by eating his body and blood at the Last Supper. During Mass, we hear these words of the Last Supper. When you hear "This is my body," "This is my blood," and "Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world" during the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the priest repeats the words that Jesus taught the disciples long ago. The Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ, unites us with God and gives us grace. Since most of you in this group are young and have yet to receive Holy Communion, know that you are very close to Jesus when near the Eucharist. You can acknowledge Jesus in the Tabernacle by genuflecting or praying until you can take Holy Communion. This is called a spiritual communion, a special way to wait until you receive the Eucharist.

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: Full of the hope in the Gospel, let us call upon God for our needs: **R.**

Lector: For the Church, mother of the lonely and the homeless, that our arms will be open to welcome those searching for hope, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

Lector: For the hungry, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

Lector: For the sick, we pray to the Lord: **R.**

Lector: For the dead, we pray to the Lord: **R.**

The leader may invite other intercessions from the children.

Leader: Almighty God, you give your children the Word of God and the Eucharist. Bless us and 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.

Readings: Lectionary, Sundays and Solemnities, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Ottawa, ON.

Liturgy adapted for Children.

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Prayer for Reverence, Archdiocese of Vancouver, BC.

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