



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

Children's Liturgy of the Word

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

For the past weeks, the revelation of Jesus as the one sent from God has unfolded. Jesus and Joshua gave their people a choice—the same choice they had been asked to make at the beginning of their ministry to the people of Israel. It is the choice that we are also each asked to make: a daily recommitment to the will of God.

Past choices can become old and partially forgotten or half-heartedly kept. They need to be revisited regularly to be revitalized. We must keep choosing Jesus and serving God, for he is our God.

Jesus has been assuring us that as his followers, we may draw life from him by eating his flesh and drinking his blood. This teaching was not hard just for the Jews of that day to accept – people today still struggle with an understanding of this truth. Many of the disciples cease to follow him. Jesus then turns to his closest companions and offers them a choice – they may go or stay. Peter again is an example of leadership as he answers Jesus' choice on behalf of the whole group with his beautiful words of faith. In the same way, Joshua sets out an option for the people in the first reading. Joshua, as Moses' successor, is the one who led the people of God into the Promised Land. All the tribes are called together to hear his last farewell, as Joshua asks them to choose between the gods of the land they now inhabit or the God of their ancestors. It is decision time for the people then, just as for the disciples of Jesus' day.

Background

Joshua 24:1-2a, 15-18 After Moses's death, Joshua becomes the leader and leads the people into the Promised Land. In Chapter 24, there is a covenant renewal ceremony at Shechem, where people are asked to choose between different gods. Joshua and his household choose to serve the LORD, and the tribes also choose to serve the LORD. In today's Gospel, Jesus challenges his disciples to make a similar choice.

Ephesians 5:21-32 The patriarchal household codes of the times become the hinge on which the author of Ephesians hangs the Christian virtue of being "subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ." Mutual love demands mutual subordination to one another out of love. Mutual love and subordination are what the author intended. Any reflection on this passage should emphasize the husbands' and wives' mutual love, subordination, equality, and dignity. Serving one another in the Lord is the choice both spouses have made.

John 6:60-69 Today, we finish talking about the Bread of Life. Some of Jesus' followers were upset because they found it hard to believe that he was the bread coming down from heaven. Jesus told them that if they found this hard to accept, they would find it even harder to understand when he returned to where he came from. Jesus said that thinking about things in a worldly way won't help. What's important is to believe in what Jesus has said. Belief in Jesus' words and claims only comes naturally. It's a gift from the Father that helps people understand Jesus' words and who he is. Some people will believe, and some won't. Many of his followers left him. Jesus asked the Twelve, "Do you want to leave too?" Peter answered for the Twelve, saying they believe in Jesus' words and they believe he is the Holy One of God. The Twelve have received the gift of faith from the Father and have made their choice. They believe Jesus has come from God and has chosen to be one with him and to serve him as he serves them.

Leaders Reflections Questions:

- † What made you choose to follow Christ?
- † What are the world's alternatives, and how attractive are they?
- † How do you go about making these major decisions?
- † What are the teachings of Jesus that you find most challenging?

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)

Dear children, in the readings, listen carefully and consider how God invites you to grow in your belief in Jesus. Our prayers are with you. 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 first book of Joshua.

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem,
and told the elders, the heads, the judges,
and they presented themselves before God.

Joshua said to all the people,
"If you are unwilling to serve the Lord,
choose whom you will serve,
whether the gods your ancestors served
in the region beyond the River
or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living.
As for me and my household,
we will serve the Lord."

Then the people answered,
"Far be it from us
that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods;
for it is the Lord our God who brought us and
our ancestors up from the land of Egypt,
out of the house of slavery.
He protected us along all the way that we went
and among all the peoples through whom we passed;
Therefore, we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God."

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 kind to one another, tenderhearted,
forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.
Imitate God, as beloved children,
and live in love, as Christ loved us
and gave himself up for us,
a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
Be subject to one another out of reverence for 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 his people:

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

When many of his disciples heard this, they said:

"This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?"

Jesus was aware that his disciples were complaining about it and
said to them, "Does this bother you?

It is the spirit that gives life.

The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

Jesus knew some did not believe him.

And he said,

So Jesus asked the twelve apostles,

"Do you also wish to go away?"

Simon Peter answered him,

"Lord, to whom can we go?

You have the words of eternal life.

We have come to believe and know
that you are the Holy One of God."

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.

Have you ever had a hard time believing something?

In the Gospel today, we hear that some of Jesus' followers had difficulty believing that Jesus is the Bread of Life. Some of them decided that what Jesus said was too hard to understand. Others refused to have faith in Jesus. Jesus knew that some people would have faith in him and others would not. Some of the crowd even stopped following him! Simon Peter said something that we can remember. He said, "Lord, there is no one else we can go to! Your words give eternal life. We have faith in you and are sure you are God's Holy One." Peter knew that even if something might be hard to understand, he could still have faith in Jesus, knowing he was the Holy One of God. Peter didn't fully understand, but he knew that through Jesus, we can have eternal life. Peter trusted Jesus absolutely and knew Jesus would help him understand more daily.

When you are confused, what do you do?

Do you ask for help?

Whose help do you request when you don't understand something?

Why do you ask that person?

We often ask adults who take care of us and those we trust for help. Our parents, grandparents, and teachers are usually our helpers. We can feel reassured that these people will be supportive, caring, and effective. We ask people we love and who love us for assistance because we know they want to see us do well in our tasks. We feel more confident and learn to develop an attitude that says, "I can do this; yes, I can!"

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, where the poor and broken-hearted find comfort, 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 Bread of Life. 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.

"A fully Christian life is inconceivable without participation in the liturgical services in which the faithful, gathered into a single assembly, celebrate the paschal mystery. Therefore, the religious initiation of children must be in harmony with this purpose."

Directory for Masses with Children, paragraph 8

"Nevertheless, in Masses of this kind, it is necessary to take great care that the children present do not feel neglected because of their inability to participate or understand what happens and what is proclaimed during the celebration. Some accounts should be taken of their presence: for example, by speaking to them directly in the brief comments (as at the beginning and the end of Mass) and at some point in the homily.

Directory for Masses with Children, paragraph 17

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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