



# DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

## Children's Liturgy of the Word

### TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

This Sunday, the Lectionary returns to Mark's Gospel after several Sundays from the Gospel of John. Mark provides significant information about the Jewish observance of ritual purity laws and addresses the question of which Jewish practices would also be observed in the newly emerging Christian community. Jesus first criticizes putting human tradition above God's law. Next, Jesus comments on the meaning of holiness—clean and unclean.

Jesus' words challenge us as well. In our desire to show that we are holy, we might also give too much credence to externals, following rules without thinking about their intention. Jesus reminds us that we do not make ourselves holy by our actions. Instead, we become holier when God's Spirit transforms us. Our actions should express our hearts' conversion to God and God's ways.

#### Leaders Reflections Questions:

- † What are some 'human regulations' in today's world that you find challenging to conform to? Why?
- † Are you in need of a change of heart? What might need to change to live the Christian life more fully?
- † What might Jesus affirm in your heart, and how might he challenge you to grow further?

## Background

**Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8** Moses warned the Israelites to listen to the Lord's laws and commandments before entering the Promised Land. He emphasized that only by actively paying attention to God's Word could they experience the fullness of life and take possession of the land God promised. It was important not to add to or subtract from God's commands, a common rule in the ancient world, to remain faithful to what had been communicated.

**Psalms 15** The backdrop of this psalm is temple and ritual worship. Some have described it as an introductory liturgy for pilgrims or anyone wishing to understand the guidelines for temple worship. The response provided by the temple priests serves as both an instruction for living and an evaluation of the spiritual journey one has embarked upon. Living in the presence of the Lord requires a life lived righteously, maintaining just and harmonious relationships with all through thoughts, words, and actions.

**James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27** For the next five Sundays, the second reading will include selections from the Letter of James. The letter can be best described as a moral encouragement to the baptized, those who have been "born through the word of truth" and are the "first fruits" of God's creative work. James starts by emphasizing his vision of God, portraying God as the source of all goodness who abundantly blesses us. Since God is unchanging, we can always rely on Him. God aims to renew the world, and those baptized into Christ are the "first fruits" of God's creative love.

**Mark 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23** This Sunday's return to Mark's account of the Gospel has Jesus confronted by some religious authorities who question his disciples' fidelity to religious laws, especially ritual purity. Mark writes primarily for a non-Jewish audience. He spells out some pharisaic regulations concerning ritual purity. Jesus responds to their questions by quoting from Isaiah, who criticized the people of his day for the external show in worship without internal conviction and for elevating human precepts to the level of doctrine. Jesus challenges the Pharisees and scribes by asserting that defilement has its source not in external actions but in interior disposition. Jesus is not saying that laws and regulations have no value. Instead, Jesus emphasizes laws and traditions that enhance, not minimize or distort, a person's relationship to God and others.

## 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, when you listen to the Word of God, pay close attention to the practice of speaking and doing. Jesus wants your words to match your actions. 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 Deuteronomy.**

Moses said: "People of Israel, listen carefully to the laws and commands that I am teaching you. If you obey them, you will live, and you will take the land that the Lord God of your ancestors is giving you. I am telling you what the Lord God has commanded. Don't add anything or take anything away."

"By faithfully obeying these commands, you will show other nations how wise and understanding you are. They will learn about these laws and say, 'This great nation is very wise and understanding.'

No other great nation has a god who is close enough to answer their prayers, as the Lord God does for us. And no other great nation has laws that are as fair as the ones I am giving you today."

*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.** The just will live in the presence of the Lord.

Only those who obey God  
and do as they should speak  
the truth and don't spread  
gossip. **R**

They treat others fairly and  
don't say cruel things. Those  
who do these things will  
always stand firm. **R**

## Second Reading

### **A reading from the letter of James.**

Brothers and sisters: Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father, who created all the lights of the heavens. He is always the same and never makes dark shadows by changing. He wants us to be his own special people, and so he sent the true message to give us new birth. Be humble and accept the message that is planted in you to save you.

Obey God's message! Don't fool yourselves by just listening to it.

*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 Mark.

Some Pharisees and several teachers of the Law of Moses from Jerusalem came and gathered around Jesus. They noticed that some of his disciples ate without first washing their hands. The Pharisees and all other Jewish people obey the teachings of their ancestors. They always wash their hands in the proper way before eating. None of them will eat anything they buy in the market until it is washed. They also follow a lot of other teachings, such as washing cups, pitchers and bowls.

The Pharisees and teachers asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples obey what our ancestors taught us to do? Why do they eat without washing their hands?"

Jesus called the crowd together again and said, "Pay attention and try to understand what I mean. The food you put into your mouth does not come out unclean and unfit to worship God. The bad words that come out of your mouth are what make you unclean."

"Out of your heart come evil thoughts, vulgar deeds, stealing, murder, unfaithfulness in marriage, greed, meanness, deceit, indecency, envy, insults, pride and foolishness. All these come from your heart, and they are what make you unfit to worship 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.

### **What did you hear in the Gospel today about washing hands before eating?**

The Pharisees were a group of people in the Jewish faith. They spoke to Jesus about a religious practice called a purity law. In Jesus' time, people who practiced the Jewish religion had to wash in a certain way before every meal. They also had rules about who they could eat with. Not washing in a certain way before eating was considered sinful behaviour, and forgiveness for sin was also part of religious tradition.

### **Who can we talk to when we need to think about our actions?**

### **If something keeps us from God, what can we do?**

In today's Gospel story, Jesus emphasized the importance of acting justly and with love instead of focusing solely on external actions like hand-washing. Jesus stressed the need for our words and actions to reflect love and integrity to avoid sinful behaviour. By aligning our words and actions with Jesus' teachings and following the example of the saints, we can walk the path of holiness. It is essential to be mindful of our actions and speech, ensuring that they align with Jesus' guidance so that we can act and speak with love.

### **If I say that I want to spend time with one of my friends but never make time to do so, do my words match my actions?**

### **What if I agree to straighten up my room but never do so? Did my actions match my words?**

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 great hope in our hearts and knowing God sees that we need help, let us pray to our loving God for our needs: **R.**

**Lector:** For the Church, which is a church of the poor, that will lead all people to make wise choices. Let us pray to the Lord. **R.**

**Lector:** For people everywhere, that they will have the opportunity and the resources needed for them to grow and learn. Let us pray to the Lord. **R.**

**Lector:** For the sick. Let us pray to the Lord **R.**

**Lector:** For the dead. Let us pray to the Lord. **R.**

The leader may invite other intercessions from the children.

**Leader:** Loving God, you provide for the poor and needy; hear the prayers we make to you through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**All:** 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.

## What is Children's Liturgy of the Word?

The celebration of the Mass is at the heart of the Catholic faith. Many parishes offer Children's Liturgy of the Word as suggested in the Directory for Masses with Children (DMC). The primary purpose of dismissing children is to provide them with a focused environment where they are more likely to become conscious, active listeners and responders to God's Word.

Children's Liturgy of the Word intends not to babysit or provide entertainment. Its celebration is a liturgical experience that opens young people to hearing and responding to God's Word in ways that enable them to be nurtured and challenged by its power and to experience the grace of ongoing conversion to the vision and values of the Word of God.

Children's Liturgy of the Word tends to be most effective for children who have not yet celebrated their First Communion. The Directory for Masses with Children also states that it is for children who have "not yet entered the period of preadolescence" (DMC, 6), and the introduction to the Lectionary for Masses with Children tells us that it is for "children of elementary grades" (LMC, 15). Children of this age can listen attentively to Scripture and respond to questions about what happens in the readings. They can also learn simple responses to the readings or prayers.

Readings: Lectionary For Masses with Children, Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, NY, 1983  
Liturgy adapted for Children.

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