



# DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

## Children's Liturgy of the Word Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Overview

In the Old Testament, a scribe was an expert who could write in ancient times when most of the population was illiterate. Scribes often rose to hold positions of great power and influence as chief ministers. However, the Old Testament scribes valued God's law deeply.

One day, a scribe asked Jesus which commandment was the most important because he wanted to understand more. Jesus said the two most important commands are to love God and your neighbour. He explained that loving God with all your soul, mind, and strength means giving your whole self to Him—everything about you! The scribe nodded in agreement, realizing that Jesus had truly captured what the law was all about.

The Gospel of Mark shows Jesus as the wisest scribe, while the Book of Hebrews describes him as a high priest. Jesus is similar to high priests because he offered a sacrifice to atone for people's sins. However, the risen Christ is different because he will never die; his priesthood lasts forever. Unlike other high priests who had to offer sacrifices repeatedly, Christ needed to offer only one sacrifice: himself. Christ made one perfect sacrifice on the cross "once for all" as both priest and sacrificial lamb.

Despite this, Jesus' work as priest is not done. Although he no longer offers sacrifices to atone for sin, the author of Hebrews writes that "he lives forever to make intercession" for those who approach God through him. That is his priestly role now: when we come to Jesus, he intercedes with God on our behalf.

### Leaders Reflections Question:

† How do you live the command to love God and love your neighbour?

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## Background

**Deuteronomy 6:2-6** Deuteronomy, meaning "second law-giving," is Moses' final message to the people. He urges the Israelites to fear the Lord, revere God, and remember God's greatness, emphasizing that adherence to the law will grant them a long life in a land of milk and honey. The reading highlights the Shema, beginning with "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God....". This essential prayer, recited by devout Jews daily, affirms God's oneness. To love God with all one's heart means to engage intellectually with God's deeds, while loving God with one's soul reflects emotional devotion. Loving God with strength involves both physical and material offerings. Through this love, the people are called to remain faithful in all areas of their lives.

**Psalms 18** This psalm leads us to do what Moses ordered: to take the law of the Lord to heart and meditate on it as a sign of God's love. As the psalm praises God's Law, it reminds us that rather than being legalistic, the Law is a source of wisdom, joy, and enlightenment; it puts us on the route to justice. Remembering all that, we joyfully exclaim, "I love you, Lord."

**Hebrews 7:23-28** Today's passage from Hebrews highlights the supreme priesthood of Jesus. The author presents three reasons: Jesus' eternal priesthood, his once-for-all self-sacrifice, and his appointment by God's oath. Consequently, Jesus is "always able to save" and continually "makes intercession" for those who approach God through him, representing humanity and God's enduring concern.

**Mark 12:28b-34** This week's Gospel readings skip over important events: Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, the curse of the fig tree, the cleansing of the temple, and false accusations. These events are better suited for Lent and Holy Week. When a scribe asks Jesus about the greatest commandment, his motivation seems more genuine than many others. He truly wants to hear Jesus' thoughts. This moment shows a meaningful conversation about faith between two men who value their traditions.

In response to the scribe's question, Jesus recalls the Shema, a prayer he likely recited daily since childhood. Like a creed, the Shema reminds people of their close relationship with the one true God. It helps them keep their identity during difficult times, such as foreign occupation or exile. Jesus doesn't stop at the first commandment but adds another important teaching from Leviticus: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Jesus' audience understands this teaching well: loving God naturally leads to loving one's neighbour.

When the scribe hears this, he does something unusual in the Gospel: he agrees with Jesus and stresses that caring for others is more important than sacrifice. At the end of their conversation, Jesus tells the scribe he is close to the kingdom of God. This suggests that the scribe understands Jesus better than the disciples, who often avoid pain and argue among themselves or those focused on wealth. This exchange highlights a rare moment where Jesus connects deeply with someone who accepts his teachings.

## 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)**

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.

**Dear children, Jesus tells us to love God and love one another. Go with your leaders to listen to Jesus.**

#### 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.

**Good and gracious God, open our minds and hearts to receive your message. Send us your Holy Spirit to help us fulfill our mission to love God and one another.**

**We ask this through Christ our Lord.**

**Amen.**

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, the Gospel is required.

### First Reading

Moses said to the people: "You, your children, and all your descendants must respect the Lord. And as long as you live, you must obey all his laws and commands that I am teaching you. If you do this, you will live a long time.

"People of Israel, listen carefully and obey all these laws. Your nation will grow strong, and you will prosper in this land that is rich in milk and honey. This is what the Lord God of your ancestors has promised you.

"Listen, people of Israel! Only the Lord is our God. You must love the Lord with all your heart, soul and strength. Don't forget anything I am telling 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. I love you, Lord.**

I love you, Lord God,  
and you make me strong.  
You are my mighty rock,  
my fortress, my protector. **R**

You are the living God!  
I will praise you.  
You are a mighty rock.  
I will honour you  
for keeping me safe. **R R**

Second Reading

**A reading from a letter to the Hebrews.**

Brothers and sisters:

Jesus is the high priest we need.

He is holy, innocent, and faultless, not like us sinners.

Jesus is honoured above all beings in heaven.

*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.*

## 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.**

One of the teachers of the Law of Moses came up while Jesus and the Sadducees were arguing.

When he heard Jesus give a good answer, he asked Jesus, "What is the most important question?"

Jesus answered, "The most important one says: 'People of Israel, you have only one Lord and God. You must love him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.'

The second most important commandment says: 'Love others as much as you love yourself.'

No other commandment is more important than these."

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?**

A teacher from the time of Jesus asked him about the most important commandment. He was referring to the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses. Jesus knew all the commandments were important, but he answered the question.

He started by talking about a commandment regarding God. The Shema is a prayer that Jesus learned as a young boy. It says, "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one.*" Jesus was explaining that there is only one God, not many gods.

He said we must love the Lord our God with all our strength, heart, mind, and soul.

### **How big of a love do you think that is?**

### **How do you love God with all your strength, heart, mind, and soul?**

Second, Jesus said we must love others as much as we love ourselves.

### **Do you love yourself?**

### **Do you see that Jesus also asks you to show the same care and love to others as yourself?**

### **Why didn't Jesus say that not lying or not stealing was most important?**

Loving God is the most essential thing in our lives. When we love God and feel His love, we become better at loving others. We should treat others the way we want to be treated. Jesus didn't dismiss the other commandments; he believed that if we follow these two—loving God and loving others—we naturally follow the rest.

For instance, we won't steal from others if we love others. People who treat others well usually aren't jealous or dishonest. We won't put anything else before God if we truly love God. This means we will honour the Lord's Day by attending church.

Jesus's most essential teachings focus on loving God and loving others. Living by these commandments can be challenging but also beautiful.

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. The leader may need 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 call on God for all our needs:

**R. Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Lector:** For the Church: that together, priests and laity demonstrate the love of God and neighbour to the world, we pray: **R.**

For governments to work to serve the needs of the poor, we pray: **R.**

For those who struggle with loneliness, we pray: **R.**

For our parents and family, we pray: **R.**

For the sick, we pray: **R.**

For the dead, we pray: **R.**

The leader may invite other intercessions from the children.

**Leader:** God, you care for your people.  
Hear our prayers 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.**

## Did You Know?

### The Purpose and History of Children's Liturgy of the Word.

In the Scriptures, God speaks to us. At Mass, God speaks to a particular people gathered at a particular time in a particular place. The Word will affect us in different ways. Each person will hear the message uniquely as the Holy Spirit reaches into the hearts of all of us to place the message that comes from God within them. When a parish celebrates a separate Liturgy of the Word with children, the vision is first and foremost that children will be led to full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgy.

The goal of a separate Children's Liturgy of the Word (CLoW) aims to help them hear God's message so they can participate. The most important point for genuinely understanding the vision for celebrating the Liturgy of the Word with children is that it is the ritual prayer of the Church and not classroom instruction. This is not to say that it does not catechize. Liturgy and catechesis are intimately connected. They are two sides of the same coin. For centuries, the Homily was the principal form of catechesis for the Church. The Church's catechesis document tells us that liturgy must be regarded as an eminent kind of catechesis and that liturgy educates us to active participation, contemplation, and silence to become conscious, active listeners and responders to God's Word.

The CLoW intends not to babysit or provide entertainment for the children. It is a liturgical experience that opens young people to hear and respond 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. When we facilitate CLoW, we are trying to:

- Help children to have an age-appropriate experience of the Liturgy of the Word
- Help children to apply the Word of God to their own experiences and actions
- Help children to become closer to God
- Help children to learn how to participate, both internally and externally, in the celebration of the Mass

How to Lead Children's Liturgy of the Word, Fosarelli, Eschenauer, Turner, Liturgy Training Publications, 2014, 4-5

### Genuflection

A **GENUFLECTION** is the action begun from a standing position in which a worshiper moves his or her right foot back a step, drops the right knee briefly to the floor, and then stands upright again. Most people naturally bow their head while performing this action; some make the Sign of the Cross. Some hold onto a nearby pew for physical support. The purpose of genuflection is for the worshiper to honor Jesus Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament.

The priest genuflects three times at Mass. During the Eucharistic Prayer, he genuflects after showing the consecrated bread to the people, and then after showing the chalice. He genuflects again before announcing, “This is the Lamb of God.” Taken together, his genuflections affirm the central belief about the Mass: during the Eucharistic Prayer, the Holy Spirit changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ; that food then becomes Communion for the faithful.

Additional genuflections should be made in churches where a tabernacle containing the Blessed Sacrament is in the sanctuary. In those cases, the

priest genuflects before and after Mass, and anyone passing in front of the tabernacle also genuflects to it. Since a tabernacle containing the Blessed Sacrament is commonly found in sanctuaries of Catholic churches, the faithful typically make a genuflection toward the tabernacle before entering and after leaving their place.

In churches where the tabernacle is not in the sanctuary, the faithful should instead bow to the altar before and after the service. Genuflection is directed not toward the altar, not toward the Cross, not toward one’s proximity to a pew, but to the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. On Good Friday, though, at the close of the service, all genuflect to the Cross.

Formerly it was customary to make a genuflection before a bishop and a double genuflection (both knees to the ground) when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed for adoration. These practices have been eliminated. A single genuflection is always appropriate before the Blessed Sacrament whether it is in the tabernacle or exposed in a monstrance; you may bow to a bishop if you wish.

*Bulletin Inserts for the Liturgical Life of the Parish: Gestures, Postures, and Customs of the Liturgy* © 2020 Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications. All rights reserved. Written by Paul Turner. *The Roman Missal* © 2010, ICEL.

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