



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

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

Overview

We have wonderful readings regarding the holiness, strength, and hospitality of two widows. Both offer signs of God's love in the world. During a prolonged drought, which played a significant role in the life of the prophet Elijah, while he was on a journey, he came across a widow in Zarephath, close to Sidon. Many people were experiencing misery at that time due to the lack of rain and food shortages. Elijah was also feeling desperate as he approached this woman, who was gathering a few sticks to cook what would be her family's last meal before they faced starvation.

The Gospel shares a powerful message as Jesus observed people donating at the temple. While many wealthy individuals contributed large sums, he remained silent about them. Then, a poor widow dropped in two small coins. Jesus called his disciples and revealed that she had given the most, as she contributed all she had, despite its small value.

This is a heartwarming story about selfless giving. The woman mentioned in the Gospel reminds us of the widow from Zarephath, who gave away her last bit of flour and oil to help the prophet Elijah. Even though she shared everything she had, her supplies miraculously didn't run out.

Before noticing the widow, Jesus warns against people who take advantage of others, especially vulnerable people. He points out that she gave everything she had to the temple, which makes us think more deeply. Did the leaders at the temple benefit from her generosity without caring for her needs? Jesus encourages us to admire the widow's selflessness and recognize and speak out against those who neglected to help her during her struggles.

Leaders Reflections Question:

† Do you live out of abundance or generosity?

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Background

1 Kings 17:10-16 Elijah was God's voice who revealed important divine messages. In the first reading, God speaks through him, which results in a blessing. God is acting through Elijah. The widow from Zarephath is a non-Jew (gentile). We begin to see that God acts through all people. The widow signified for us the Christian mission of hospitality, even though she was oppressed.

Psalms 146 This psalm emphasizes God's care for the oppressed, hungry, prisoners, homeless, blind, strangers, and widows and orphans. God's justice is divine, helping us connect the right relationships with authentic behaviour.

Hebrews 9:24-28 To understand this passage, we refer to Leviticus 16, which details Yom Kippur, the holiest day for Jews. On this day, the high priest enters the Holy of Holies with the blood of sacrifices to seek forgiveness from God. Hebrews states that Jesus, our perfect High Priest, has entered the heavenly sanctuary with His own blood, becoming the new mercy seat and offering eternal redemption. The passage notes that Jesus was offered once to take away the sins of many. The author of Hebrews connects Jesus to the Old Testament roles of High Priest and Servant, emphasizing that His singular sacrifice fulfills the old law and does not need repetition. When Christ returns, it will be to bring salvation at the end of time.

Mark 12:38-44 The last time Mark presents Jesus in the temple occurs during one of the most dramatic moments of his entire Gospel. Jesus begins by warning people to be wary of the scribes, who pray in long, loud voices to be seen and respected as "the holy ones" (vv. 38–39). However, their actions reveal the emptiness of their prayers, as they "devour the houses of widows" (v. 40). This behaviour also goes against a special commandment given to their ancestors by Moses: "You shall not wrong any widow or orphan or stranger" (Exod 22:21).

In contrast to this hypocrisy, Mark includes a poignant example in the story of a poor widow (vv. 41–44). Mark emphasizes her contribution, stating that while she donates much less money than wealthy individuals (v. 41), she gives all she has—her entire livelihood (v. 44). Her offering represents what it truly means to depend on God. Consequently, the widow serves as a model of faith for Mark's readers. By imitating her generous and trusting faith, they will also follow the example of Jesus, who gave up his very life for the many (chs. 14–15).

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, as you listen to the Word of God today, know that God provides for those who give even when they have little. When they do, they have more than enough. Go in peace.

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

A reading from the first book of Kings.

Elijah, the prophet, went to Zarephath.

A widow was there gathering sticks;

When he came to the gate of the town,

He asked her for a cup of water.

As she was going to bring it, he asked her as well,

"Would you bring me a piece of bread?"

But she said, "As the Lord your God lives,

I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar

and a little oil in a jug;

I am now gathering a couple of sticks

so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my

son, that we may eat it and die."

Elijah said to her,

"Do not be afraid;

go and do as you have said;

but first, make me a little cake of it and bring it to me,

and afterwards, make something for yourself and your

son. For thus says the Lord the God of Israel:

'The jar of meal will not be emptied,

and the jug of oil will not fail

until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth.'"

She went and did as Elijah said

so that she, as well as he and her household, ate for

many days. The jar of meal was not emptied,

neither did the jug of oil fail,

according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah.

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. Praise the Lord, my soul!

It is the Lord who keeps faith forever,
who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free. **R.**

The Lord opens the eyes of the blind
and lifts those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous
and watches over the strangers. **R.**

The Lord upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.
The Lord will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations. **R.**

Second Reading

A reading from a letter to the Hebrews.

Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands,
a mere copy of the true one,
but he entered into heaven itself,
now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

Nor was it to offer himself again and again,
as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year
with blood that is not his own;
for then he would have had to suffer again and again
since the foundation of the world.

But as it is, Christ has appeared once and for all at the
end of the age to remove sin by sacrificing himself.
And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once,
and after that comes the judgment,
so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of
many, will appear a second time,
not to deal with sin,
but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

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.

Jesus watched the crowd put money into the donation box (collection).

Many rich people put in large sums.

A poor widow came and put in two small coins, worth about a penny.

Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she, out of her poverty, has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

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?

Have you ever heard of a widow?

A widow is a woman whose husband has died, often leaving her needing financial help. In Jesus' time, she had to be careful with her money. In the Gospel, Jesus saw people giving money to the Temple, noting that while the rich gave large sums, the widow contributed what appeared to be a small amount. However, despite being much less than what others gave, the amount she gave was much more in comparison to what the others gave.

Do you know why she did this?

The reason is that she gave everything she had, not just a few extra dollars. The widow had no money to offer; after she gave to the Temple (the Church), she had no money for herself. Jesus wants us to see the widow as a prime example of selfless giving.

What does being selfless mean?

Selflessness means sharing the last thing you want to give up. Selflessness is about giving what you can, whether time, kind words, or effort. For example, when your mom or dad asks you to pick up your toys before bed, doing it is a sign of love. This is selflessness.

In the last few weeks, we have been learning about love and caring for others. Last week, we heard about Jesus' two main commands: love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and love others as you love yourself. The widow showed her love for God and others by giving all her money to the Church. She focused more on loving God and others than on her own needs.

What can you do to help others?

Giving your best effort can be tough, but don't be afraid to work hard.

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 Church leaders, may they serve the poor, we pray: **R.**

For government leaders, may they always ensure that they take care of people without much in their lives, we pray: **R.**

For widows and widowers and their loved ones, 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: Loving God, help all who seek you through 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.

Readings: Lectionary Sundays and Solemnities,
Canadian Conferences of Catholic Bishops, 2009, adapted for children.
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