



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

Children's Liturgy of the Word Fourth Sunday of Advent

Overview

Mary plays a vital role in the Christian tradition. Catholics honour her because God chose her to bring Jesus, God's Son, into the world. This choice was not forced—God waited for her acceptance. When the angel Gabriel told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth was expecting a baby, she was likely surprised since Elizabeth had never been able to have children. Mary visited Elizabeth, and both women knew they were chosen by God, who would bless their children in a special way.



The Gospel today describes what is commonly called 'The Visitation' – the coming together of two women to acknowledge the action of God in their lives. Mary, a young girl from an obscure village in Palestine, becomes the mother of God. Elizabeth's greeting to Mary reminds us that faith is a gift from God. Elizabeth knew by intuition from God about her cousin and the child she was born—no person had explained the circumstances to her. This is symbolized by the leaping of her unborn child inside her. God uses those who are small and powerless to bring about salvation. Luke's Gospel pays a great deal of attention to the role of women in the story of salvation.

Leaders Reflections Question:

† What do you believe God promises you?

Suggested Focus



Prepare a focus for the area where the children's Liturgy of the Word is to be held:

Violet cloth, a Lectionary, a candle, a bowl of water and the Advent Wreath.

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Background

Micah 5:1-4 Micah's upbringing in Moresheth, near Jerusalem, shaped his ministry as he witnessed the oppression of poor residents by the government and Assyrian armies. He spoke out for justice and the vulnerable. On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, Micah's reading emphasizes hope, identifying Bethlehem as the birthplace of the promised saviour connected to David. He proclaims that this shepherd will bring peace to long-war-affected people.

Psalms 80 The shepherd imagery in this psalm emphasizes the role of shepherds in providing care for sheep, symbolizing a community's desire for safety. Psalm 80 mentions the "son of man," referring to the anticipated Messiah. The psalmist expresses hope for the son of man's arrival and divine protection on this Fourth Sunday of Advent. Jesus, who identifies as the Son of Man, fulfills this Old Testament prophecy for Christians.

Hebrews 10:5-10 The book of Hebrews is a New Testament letter aimed at early Jewish Christians experiencing suffering. The author encourages them by interpreting their struggles through Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. He presents Jesus as the high priest who offers Himself the perfect sacrifice, making previous offerings unnecessary and granting forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Through His surrender, Jesus reveals the path to the Father.

Luke 1:39-45 In this touching account, two pregnant women, Elizabeth and Mary, come together to support one another amid uncertainty. Despite potential shame—Elizabeth for her late pregnancy and Mary for being unmarried—they embrace their roles in God's plan of redemption. Elizabeth joyfully recognizes Mary as she proclaims, "Blessed are you among women," signalling the arrival of salvation. Their communion reflects the Holy Spirit's movement, guiding them to accept God's will. In surrendering to the unknown, they find profound joy, reminding us that God's Spirit will provide what we need, bringing the inexplicable joy that only God can give.

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, Christmas is approaching fast. While you wait, listen to Jesus. 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.

O God,

You have given us many gifts, the greatest of which is your Son, Jesus. Please help us always remember your goodness.

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 book of the prophet Micah.

Town of Bethlehem Ephrathah,
you are one of the smallest in the nation of Judah.
But I will choose one of your people to rule the nation.
And his family goes back to ancient times.

The Lord will abandon Israel only until this ruler is born
and the rest of his family comes back to join Israel.

He will stand like a shepherd feeding his sheep
by the power and glorious name of the Lord his God.
His people will live in peace,
and everyone on earth will know how great the Lord is.

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. Rouse your power, O Lord, and come to save us.

Shepherd of Israel,
you sit on your throne
above the winged creatures.

Listen to our prayer
and let your light shine.
Save us by your power. **R.**

God All-Powerful,
please do something!
Look down from heaven
and see what's happening to this vine.
With your own hands
you planted its roots. **R.**

Second Reading

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

Brothers and sisters:

When Christ came into the world, he said,
"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body you have prepared for me;
in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said,
as it is written of me in the scroll of the book,
'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God.'"

When Christ said,
"You have neither desired nor taken pleasure
in sacrifices and offerings
and burnt offerings and sin offerings."

(these are offered according to the law),
then he added,
"See, I have come to do your will."

He abolishes the first
in order to establish the second.
And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified
through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ
once for all.

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 Luke.

Mary hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea.
She went into Zechariah's home,
 where she greeted Elizabeth.
When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting,
 her baby moved within her.

The Holy Spirit came upon Elizabeth.
Then, in a loud voice, she said to Mary:
"God has blessed you more than any other woman!
He has also blessed the child you will have.
Why should the mother of my Lord come to me?
As soon as I heard your greeting,
 my baby became happy and moved within me.
The Lord has blessed you because you believed
 that he will keep his promise."

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: Joyful Waiting for Sunday

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:

Welcome and Introduction



Good morning, everyone! Today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent. **Do you see how many candles are lit on the Advent wreath? (Let the children respond: four.)**

That's right—four candles! This means Christmas is almost here, and we're so close to celebrating Jesus' birth!

What did you hear in the Readings?

In today's Gospel, we hear about something extraordinary that happened when Mary, the mother of Jesus, visited her cousin Elizabeth. Mary had just learned from the angel that she would be the mother of Jesus. She travelled to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who was also having a special baby—John the Baptist! When Mary arrived, Elizabeth was so happy to see her. Elizabeth felt her baby leap with joy in her tummy and knew that Mary's baby, Jesus, was exceptional.

What did Elizabeth say?

Elizabeth said, "Blessed are you, Mary, and blessed is the child you will have!" She was so excited and joyful because she knew Jesus was coming.

Reflection Questions and Discussion

- 1) Why was Elizabeth so happy? **(Let the children respond.)**
 - a) She was happy because Mary was carrying baby Jesus, who would bring love and joy to the world.
 - b) Explain: Elizabeth could feel God's love and joy in Mary's visit.
- 2) How do we feel when we know something exciting is coming, like Christmas?
 - a) Let the children share their feelings—joy, excitement, or maybe even a little impatience.
 - b) Share: Just like Elizabeth was excited to meet Jesus, we can feel joyful because we're getting ready to celebrate Jesus' birthday at Christmas!
- 3) How can we show love and joy this week?
 - a) Ask: What can we do to make others happy and share God's love?
 - b) Suggestions: Smile at others, help at home, share with friends, or say kind words to someone.

Bringing It All Together

Mary and Elizabeth remind us that Jesus brings everyone joy, love, and blessings. This week, let's get ready for Christmas by being joyful like Elizabeth and loving like Mary. When we share joy and love, we prepare our hearts for Jesus to come!

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: As we prepare for Jesus to come into our hearts this Christmas, let us pray to God, who listens with love. After each prayer, we say: "Lord, hear our prayer."

1. For the Church: That all people in the Church will share the joy and love of Jesus as we prepare to celebrate His birth. We pray to the Lord. **R.**
2. For our world: That peace and kindness will grow everywhere, especially in places with fighting or sadness. We pray to the Lord. **R.**
3. For families: That all families will feel love and happiness as they get ready for Christmas, just like Mary and Elizabeth did. We pray to the Lord. **R.**
4. For those in need: That people who are hungry, lonely, or afraid will find comfort and help from those who care about them. We pray to the Lord. **R.**
5. For children everywhere: That we will spread joy and kindness to others, just as Jesus teaches us. We pray to the Lord. **R.**
6. For our special prayers: Let us quietly ask God for something special in our hearts. (Pause for silence.) We pray to the Lord. **R.**

The leader may invite other intercessions from the children.

Leader: Loving God, thank You for hearing our prayers. Help us to share Your love and joy with everyone as we prepare to welcome Jesus. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Return to the church.

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.

Scriptures from the Lectionary for Masses with Children
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