



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

Children's Liturgy of the Word

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Finding Hope in the Word of God

Sunday of the Word of God (or Bible Sunday)

The church celebrates Sunday of the Word of God on the Third Sunday of Ordinary Time each year to emphasize the importance of the Bible, also known as God's Word. Bible Sunday is a time to reflect on how the Bible helps us grow in faith, guides our daily lives, and connects us to God's promises of love, hope, and salvation. The Bible is more than just a book; it's how God speaks to us. It tells us who God is, how much God loves us, and how we are called to live. The Bible is the foundation of our faith. It shapes our prayers, worship, and how we act as Christians. Bible Sunday is a reminder to spend time with God's Word—not just reading it but living it out by loving others, sharing hope, and trusting God.

Overview

The readings collectively emphasize the power of God's Word to transform lives, restore hope, and unite communities. They call us to participate in Christ's mission of bringing good news and healing to the world. Whether through hearing and celebrating Scripture, recognizing the value of each person in the community, or following Jesus' example, the Word of God is a primary source of instruction, hope, and joy.

Both the first reading and the Gospel today speak of the public proclamation of the scriptures. Nehemiah, the governor, and Ezra, the priest, played a central role in the restoration of Jerusalem after Israel returned from exile in Babylon. Ezra had been sent to reconstruct the people's religious traditions according to the Law of Moses. Once again, after exile, the people are actively listening to the public proclamation of the Scriptures. The words touch their hearts.

In the Gospel, when Jesus stands to speak to the people of his hometown in the synagogue. This announcement points to the focus of Jesus' mission to the lowly, the infirm, and the marginalized of society. The Gospel message conveys Jesus' compelling nature as the fulfillment of the prophecy.

Of the four Gospels, Luke's is the most explicit and frequent in its reference to the work of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus opens his preaching by acknowledging the Spirit. This Gospel challenges us to embrace Jesus' mission as our own. We are called to bring hope to the marginalized, share the good news of God's love, and work for justice.

Leaders Reflections Question:

- † In what practical way can I bring good news to someone going through a tough time today?
- † How can I bring Hope to others through the Scriptures?

Suggested Focus

Prepare a focus for the children's Liturgy of the Word area: Green cloth, a Lectionary, and a candle.

Background (Exegesis)

Nehemiah 8:2-6, 8-10 This passage is set as the Israelites return to Jerusalem after their Babylonian exile. Nehemiah has led efforts to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and Ezra, the priest, focuses on the spiritual rebuilding of the people by reintroducing them to the Law of Moses (Sacred Scripture). Ezra reads the Law out loud to a gathered community while they listen attentively, showing their reverence for God's Word. Understanding God's Word evokes an emotional response, highlighting its power to convict and transform hearts. The people's response—standing, bowing, and worshipping—demonstrates their deep respect for God and acknowledgment of God's authority.

Psalms 19 praises the perfection of God's law and its life-giving qualities. It describes how God's commandments provide wisdom, joy, and enlightenment. God's law gives life, revives the soul, makes the heart glad, and enlightens the mind.

1 Corinthians 12:12-30 St. Paul addresses divisions in the Corinthian church by using the analogy of the human body to explain the unity and diversity of the Church as the Body of Christ. Just as the body has many parts that work together, so does the Church rely on the unique gifts of its members. Each person, no matter their role, is essential to the community. Paul stresses that no one can claim superiority or inferiority in the Body of Christ. Every member is equally valuable, and the community thrives when all work together.

Gospel: Luke 4:14-21 This passage marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus returns to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit, and reads from Isaiah in the synagogue of his hometown, Nazareth. Jesus identifies himself as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. The Spirit anoints him to bring good news to the poor, freedom to captives, sight to the blind, and liberation to the oppressed. This is the inauguration of his ministry and the declaration of a new era of salvation. The reference to the "year acceptable to the Lord" echoes the Jubilee of Hope, a time of restoration, freedom, and forgiveness. Jesus embodies this Jubilee, bringing hope and renewal to all.

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)

Good morning, children. Jesus is always present when we listen to the Bible. Go with your leaders and listen to God's Word.

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.

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 and begin with the introduction.

Let us pray:

Loving God, thank you for bringing us together to listen to your Word. Help us to understand your message of hope and joy. Teach us how to live in your love and share it with everyone we meet. 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 Nehemiah.

All the people came together and stood in the open area in front of the Water Gate¹. They asked Ezra, the teacher, to read to them from the Law of Moses² that the Lord had given his people. So, the priest Ezra came with the Law and stood before the crowd of men and women. Everyone who was able to understand was there. From early morning till noon, Ezra read the Law of Moses aloud in front of the Water Gate. They all listened carefully as Ezra stood and read from the wooden platform built for him. The platform was very high; everyone could see Ezra as he opened the Book of the Law. And when he opened it, they all stood up. Ezra praised the wonderful Lord God, and the people shouted, "Amen! Amen!" They bowed low to the ground and worshipped the Lord. The men on the platform with him translated what he read and explained what it meant to the people. Then Nehemiah, the governor; Ezra, the priest and teacher; and the Levites teaching the people all said, "Don't be sad or cry! This is a special day for the Lord your God." They said this because the people cried when God's Law was read to them. Nehemiah told the people, "Enjoy your good food and wine and share what you have with everyone who didn't have any to bring. Don't be sad! This is a special day for the Lord, and he will make you happy and strong."

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.

¹ WATER GATE was on the E side of Jerusalem. All that is known about the gate is that it was located on the E side of Jerusalem.

² Serves as a key element of God's covenant with his people, a formative part of Israelite culture, and the primary description of the earliest sections of the Hebrew Bible.

Responsorial Psalm

R Your words, Lord, are spirit and life.

The Law of the Lord is perfect;

it gives us new life.

His teachings last forever,

and they give wisdom to ordinary people. **R**

The Lord's instruction is right;

it makes our hearts glad.

His commands shine brightly,

and they give us light. **R**

Let my words and my thoughts

be pleasing to you,

Lord, because you are my mighty rock

and my protector. **R**

Second Reading

A reading from the letter of Paul to Corinthians.

Brothers and sisters:

The body of Christ has many different parts, just as any other body does.

Some of us are Jews, and others are Gentiles. Some of us are not free, and others are free.

But God's Spirit baptized each of us and made us part of the body of Christ. Now, we each drink from that same Spirit.

Our bodies don't have just one part. They have many parts.

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.

Jesus returned to Galilee with the power of the Spirit³. News about him spread everywhere. He taught in the Jewish meeting places, and everyone praised him.

Jesus went back to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and as usual, he went to the meeting place on the Sabbath. When he stood up to read from the Scriptures, he was given the book of Isaiah the prophet.

He opened it and read,

"The Lord's Spirit has come to me because he has chosen me to tell the good news to the poor. The Lord has sent me to announce freedom for prisoners, to give sight to the blind, to free everyone who suffers, and to say, 'This is the year the Lord has chosen.' "

Jesus closed the book, then handed it back to the man in charge and sat down.

Everyone in the meeting place looked straight at Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, "What you have just heard me read has come true today."

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.

³ Jesus is now equipped with the Holy Spirit that occurred at his baptism and is with him at the beginning of his public ministry.

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:

Leader:

- **What did we hear?**

In today's Gospel, Jesus goes to a synagogue, which is like a church. He reads from a scroll (similar to the Gospel) that says God will send someone to bring good news to the poor, help people who are hurt, and set people free. Then Jesus says, I am the one God sent to do these things! This message tells us that Jesus brings hope to everyone, especially during difficult times.

Have you ever felt sad or needed help?

Who do you turn to when you need hope?

What is Hope? (Hope means trusting that God loves us and will always care for us.)

How Did Jesus Bring Hope? (Jesus helped people who were sad or sick and showed them God's love.)

How Can We Share Hope? (By being kind, helping others, and praying for people who need God's love.)

Say, "Imagine your friend falls and feels sad. You can give them hope by helping them and saying, 'It's okay! I'm here for you.' That's what Jesus does for all of us!"

Remind the children, "Jesus brings us hope because He loves us so much. We can trust him to care for us and help us share his love with others."

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:

God is always near us and fills our hearts with hope. Let us pray to him, trusting in his love and mercy. **R** Lord, fill us with your hope.

1. For the Church: That all who follow Jesus may be messengers of hope, sharing God's love and forgiveness with the world. We pray to the Lord. **R**
2. For world leaders: That they may work for peace and justice and bring hope to those who are poor or suffering. We pray to the Lord. **R**
3. For families: That God's love may fill their homes, bringing them joy, peace, and hope for the future. We pray to the Lord. **R**
4. For children everywhere: That they may grow up in safety, with plenty of food, care, and the chance to learn and dream. We pray to the Lord. **R**
5. For those who are sad, lonely, or afraid: That they may feel God's comforting presence and find hope in His promises. We pray to the Lord. **R**
6. For our parish community: That we may always help one another and be a sign of hope to everyone we meet. We pray to the Lord. **R**
7. For ourselves: That we may trust in God's plans for us and be thankful for all the blessings He gives us. We pray to the Lord. **R**

The leader may invite other intercessions from the children.

Leader:

Heavenly Father, thank you for hearing our prayers. Fill our hearts with hope, and help us to share Your love with everyone we meet. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son. 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.

Celebrating the Liturgy of the Word with Children

In 2006, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) issued guidelines regarding Children's Liturgy of the Word.

GUIDELINES FOR CELEBRATING THE LITURGY OF THE WORD WITH CHILDREN.

Children's Liturgy of the Word is not a substitute for Sunday school; it is not primarily a moment for catechesis. Instead, it is a component of the ritual prayer of Mass, just as it is for adults.

Learning may occur during the Liturgy of the Word, but it is in the context of liturgical prayer. The Children's Liturgy of the Word should never be seen as separate from Mass. It should flow with and in the greater celebration of the Sunday Mass. Although the children may be in a different space for the liturgy of the Word, we should not think of them as having been dismissed from the assembly. Most of the time, the children should be with the assembly at Sunday liturgy. When they are elsewhere, it is to enhance their inclusion in the liturgy, not separate them from it.

Some highlights to consider:

What is it?

Children's Liturgy is about breaking open the Word of God for young people to help them better understand the Word of God.

When should we send them?

The usual place is after the Opening Prayer. If the sending occurs at this point, there is no need to say another Opening Prayer; the priest has already recited one on behalf of all to prepare our hearts and minds to listen to and reflect upon God's Word. If you choose to begin the Children's Liturgy with an Opening Prayer, consider sending the children after the welcome and before the Opening Prayer.

How do we send them?

A "praise refrain" could accompany the sending. Anything resembling a mini-homily should be avoided. The priest should not bless the children, as a blessing at this juncture would resemble a dismissal. Remember, the children will return and receive the final blessing after Mass with the rest of the assembly.

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Readings: Lectionary for Masses with Children, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, USCCB
Adapted for children.

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