



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

Children's Liturgy of the Word

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Jesus Forgives and Loves US

Overview

The themes of the Fifth Sunday of Lent are renewal, mercy, and the transformative power of faith in Christ.

The Gospel is known as *The Woman Caught in Adultery*. The Gospel is presented in two forms (Sunday Mass and Adapted for Children).

In the time of Jesus, many laws carried severe punishments for anyone caught breaking them. One such punishment was to be stoned or put to death by a crowd of people throwing rocks. In today's Gospel, some leaders bring before Jesus a woman guilty of breaking such a law.

In response, the Gospel highlights the importance of recognizing God's mercy, the joy of restoration, and the call to live a life of faith that seeks to know Christ more deeply. Together, these themes encourage a reflective and hopeful approach to the Lenten journey, inviting believers to embrace the new life offered through Christ.

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Background

Isa 43:16-21 Isaiah speaks of God's power to make a way in the sea and a path in the mighty waters, referencing the Exodus, where God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. This reading calls for recognizing God's continuous action in history, always offering new possibilities for those who trust Him. Just as God made a way through the Red Sea, he will make a way through the present difficulties of his people. The focus is not on past glories but on the future hope that God is preparing.

Psalms 126 reflects on the joy of returning home after exile and acknowledges that the return is not yet complete. It acknowledges present difficulties but also strongly believes that those who struggle will reap with shouts of joy. The image of carrying sheaves suggests a fruitful harvest after a period of hardship.

Philippians 3:8-14 This passage highlights the Christian's journey as one of continuously striving towards a deeper relationship with Christ, leaving behind past achievements and failures to embrace the future God called them to.

John 8:1-11 This passage recounts the story of the woman caught in adultery. The scribes and Pharisees bring her to Jesus, seeking to trap him between the law of Moses, which commands stoning for adultery, and his teachings of mercy. This story powerfully illustrates the boundless mercy of Christ, who does not condone sin but offers forgiveness and a new beginning. It challenges the self-righteousness of those who are quick to judge and condemn others, and it calls for recognizing one's sinfulness and need for God's grace.

Key Message for Children

- † Jesus Forgives and Loves Us – No matter our mistakes, Jesus is always ready to forgive us when we say sorry and try to do better.
- † We Should Not Judge Others – Instead of pointing out what others do wrong, we should be kind and help them to do what is right.
- † God's Mercy is Greater Than Our Mistakes—Just like Jesus forgave the woman, Jesus forgives us. God's love is bigger than any mistake we can make.

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, go with your leaders to listen to God's Word. Open your ears and hearts to learn about Jesus's love.

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.

Let us pray:

(pause for a few seconds)

Loving God, thank You for bringing us together. Help us to listen to Your Word with open hearts. Teach us to be kind, forgiving, and full of love, just like Jesus. Amen

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

FIRST READING

Isaiah 43.16-21

I am about to do a new thing: I will give drink to my chosen people.

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

- 16 Thus says the Lord,
who makes a way in the sea,
a path in the mighty waters,
17 who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior;
they lie down, they cannot rise,
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:
18 Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.
19 I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.
20 The wild animals will honour me,
the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
21 the people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise.

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

Psalm 126

R. The Lord has done great things for us;
we are filled with joy.

1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy. **R.**

Then it was said among the nations,
"The Lord has done great things for them."

3 The Lord has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced. **R.**

Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses in the desert of the Negev.

5 May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy. **R.**

6 Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves. **R.**

SECOND READING

Philippians 3.8-14

*I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish,
so that I may attain Christ.*

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians.

- 8 I regard everything as loss
because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.
For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things,
and I regard them as rubbish,
- 9 in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him,
not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law,
but one that comes through faith in Christ,
the righteousness from God based on faith.
- 10 I want to know Christ
and the power of his resurrection
and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death,
- 11 if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.
- 12 Not that I have already obtained this
or have already reached the goal;
but I press on to make it my own,
because Christ Jesus has made me his own.
- 13 Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own;
but this one thing I do:
forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,
- 14 I press on toward the goal
for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus..

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.

The children stand for the Gospel. They sign themselves on the forehead, lips, and chest.

GOSPEL

John 8.1-11

Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.

A reading from the gospel according to John.

- 1 Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.
- 2 Early in the morning, he came again to the temple.
All the people came to him
and he sat down and began to teach them.
- 3 The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman
who had been caught in adultery;
and making her stand before the people,
- 4 they said to Jesus,
"Teacher, this woman was caught
in the very act of committing adultery.
- 5 In the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women.
Now, what do you say?"
- 6 They said this to test Jesus,
so that they might have some charge to bring against him.
Jesus bent down
and wrote with his finger on the ground.
- 7 When the scribes and Pharisees kept on questioning him,
Jesus straightened up and said to them,
"Let anyone among you who is without sin
be the first to throw a stone at her."
- 8 And once again, Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground.
- 9 When the scribes and Pharisees heard what Jesus had said,
they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders;
and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.
- 10 Jesus straightened up and said to her,
"Woman, where are they?
Has no one condemned you?"
- 11 She said, "No one, sir."
And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you.
Go your way, and from now on, do not sin again."

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.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 43.16-21

I am about to do a new thing: I will give drink to my chosen people.

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

- 16 God says,
17 "A long time ago, I helped my people escape from Egypt
by making a path through the sea.
But guess what?
19 I am going to do something new and amazing!
I will make rivers in the desert
so everyone can have water.
20 Even the animals will be happy
and give thanks to me.

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

Psalms 126

- R.** The Lord has done great things for us.
1 We were happy when God brought us home.
It was like a dream come true.
2 Everyone was laughing and singing.
3 God has done great things for us,
and we are glad. **R.**
6 Even when we are sad,
if we keep planting good seeds,
we will receive happiness. **R.**

SECOND READING

Philippians 3.8-14

*I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish,
so that I may attain Christ.*

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians.

- 8 Paul said,
"I used to think many things were important
but now I know that
knowing Jesus is the most important thing of all!
13 I forget about what I did before,
and I try my best to follow Jesus
14 and reach the prize God has for me 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.

The children stand for the Gospel. They sign themselves on the forehead, lips, and chest.

GOSPEL

John 8.1-11

Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.

A reading from the gospel according to John.

- 1 Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.
- 3 Some men brought a woman to Him who had done something wrong.
- 6 They wanted to punish her.
- 7 When the men kept on questioning Him,
Jesus said, "If you have never done anything wrong, you can throw the first stone."
- 9 But no one could because everyone makes mistakes sometimes.
So Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.
- 11 Jesus told the woman that He wasn't going to punish her, but she should try not to do bad things anymore.

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 children to respond*)

Have you ever done something wrong and felt bad about it?

Maybe you said something unkind, didn't tell the truth, or didn't listen to your parents or teacher. We all make mistakes sometimes. The woman in today's Gospel made a mistake, too, and people wanted to punish her.

But what did Jesus do?

He didn't shout or say mean things. Instead, He showed love and mercy. He told the people, "If you've never done anything wrong, then you can throw the first stone." But no one did because they knew they had made mistakes, too.

Jesus helped the woman feel loved, not ashamed. He told her, "Go and don't sin anymore." That means: "You can do better. I believe in you."

Think About This:

How do you feel when someone forgives you?

Can you forgive someone who hurt your feelings?

What can you do to be more like Jesus this week?

Jesus is full of mercy and forgiveness. He doesn't want us to do bad things, but when we do, He forgives us if we are truly sorry. We should also forgive others when they make mistakes.

Lent is not just about giving up certain things but about embracing a new way of life rooted in God's grace and mercy.

Alternate Reflection

What did you hear? *(Allow children to respond)*

This story teaches us something very important about Jesus and ourselves.

Let's think about what just happened.

What did the people want Jesus to do to the woman? *(They wanted him to punish her.)*

What did Jesus say to them? *(Whoever has never sinned may throw the first stone.)*

What did the people do after Jesus said that? *(They walked away, one by one, because they knew they had all made mistakes too.)*

What did Jesus say to the woman? *(He told her that he did not condemn her and to go and sin no more.)*

What does this story teach us about Jesus? *(He is kind, forgiving, and loves us even when we make mistakes.)*

How does Jesus make decisions about us?

Jesus does not condemn us but calls us to change. Sometimes, we make mistakes, but Jesus does not turn away from us. He offers us forgiveness and a new beginning. He wants us to grow in love and kindness.

We should not judge others harshly – The men in the story were quick to point out the woman's mistake, but Jesus reminded them that they were not perfect either. Instead of judging others, we should help them to do better.

God's mercy is always greater than our sins – no matter what we have done, God's love is bigger. God is always ready to forgive us when we are genuinely sorry.

Have you ever done something wrong and felt sorry about it?

Have you ever forgiven someone who hurt your feelings?

How does it feel when someone forgives you?

This story teaches us that Jesus does not want to punish us for making mistakes. He wants us to learn from them and do better.

Let's think about our own lives.

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

The intercessions are said. The Leader introduces them - and an assistant announces them.

The leader says:

Jesus teaches us to be kind, forgiving, and full of love. Let us pray to God, who always listens to us with love. After each prayer, we will say: "Lord, hear our prayer." R: Lord, hear our prayer.

Assistant:

For the Church – that all leaders, priests, deacons, and people may follow Jesus' example of love and mercy. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For those who have been hurt by others – that they may find the strength to forgive and experience healing. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For our families and friends – that we may show love and patience toward one another every day. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For ourselves – that we may choose kindness over judgment and forgiveness over anger, just as Jesus teaches us. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For all who are sick or suffering – that God may bring them healing, peace, and comfort. We pray to the Lord. R:

The Leader says:

Loving God, we know that you always hear our prayers. Help us to follow Jesus by showing kindness, love, and forgiveness to everyone we meet. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Leader: Let's finish by making the Sign of the Cross together.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

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.

Readings: Lectionary for Sundays and Solemnities, CCCB, Ottawa, ON.
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