



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

Children's Liturgy of the Word

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Overview

The Sixth Sunday of Easter focuses on love, obedience, the Holy Spirit, and the New Jerusalem. The first reading highlights the Council of Jerusalem, where early Church leaders decided that Gentile converts did not need to follow Jewish customs for salvation, specifically that circumcision wasn't required. The second reading portrays the "holy city Jerusalem" descending from heaven, symbolizing the fulfillment of God's plan to dwell with his people. This radiant city, illuminated by "the glory of God," highlights his direct presence.

In the Gospel, Jesus teaches that if you love him, you will follow his teachings, leading to God's love for you and his presence in your life. He promises the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, to guide and help remember his words. Jesus offers his peace, which is a special gift that transcends life's troubles. He tells his disciples he will return to the Father and encourages them to trust in his promises.

In summary, the Sixth Sunday of Easter calls believers to live out their love for Jesus through obedience to his Word, to trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and to find peace in Christ's promises.

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Background

Acts 15:1-2, 22-29 is a foundational passage for understanding the early Church's struggle to define its identity and mission. The Council of Jerusalem's decision not to impose the Mosaic Law on Gentile converts was a pivotal moment that paved the way for the universal spread of Christianity. The passage also underscores the importance of communal discernment, the authority of the apostles, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

Psalms 67 is a powerful prayer for divine blessing and universal recognition of God's reign. It combines thanksgiving with petition, expressing a longing for all nations to experience God's saving power and to join in the chorus of praise. The psalm's themes of universalism, justice, blessing, and missionary vision continue to resonate with believers today, inspiring them to seek God's favour and to share his love with the world.

Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23 provides a breathtaking glimpse of the New Jerusalem, a symbolic representation of the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan and the perfect union between God and humanity. The city's beauty, security, and divine illumination offer a powerful vision of hope and encouragement for believers, assuring them of a glorious future in the presence of God.

John 14:23-29 This passage from the Gospel of John is part of Jesus' farewell discourse to his disciples at the Last Supper. In it, Jesus speaks of the intimate relationship between love, obedience, and the indwelling presence of God. He also promises the gift of the Holy Spirit, who will teach and remind them of all that he has said, and he imparts his peace to them. It promises the gift of the Holy Spirit, who will guide and empower believers, and it imparts a peace that transcends the troubles of the world. This passage offers comfort, encouragement, and instruction to all who seek to follow Jesus and live according to his word.

Key Message for Children

- † The early Church leaders faced a problem and collaborated to find a mutually agreeable solution, highlighting the importance of dialogue and listening during disagreements.
- † God is Our Light: In the heavenly city, God's glory illuminates everything, signifying that His love and presence bring goodness and brightness.
- † Love Means Following Jesus: Jesus says that if we love him, we will do what he says. This means we should try to be kind, helpful, and loving, just like Jesus taught us.
- † The Holy Spirit Helps Us: Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to help us remember and understand his teachings.

Key Message for Leaders

- † Discernment: Emphasize how the early Church grappled with integrating new Gentile converts while maintaining its core identity. Discuss the importance of discernment in addressing contemporary issues within the Church.
- † Living in Light of Eternity: Encourage reflection on how the vision of the New Jerusalem can transform our perspective on earthly challenges and inspire us to live with greater purpose and hope.
- † The Role of the Holy Spirit: Emphasize the promise of the Holy Spirit as the Advocate who teaches, reminds, and guides us. Explain how the Holy Spirit empowers us to live out our faith in practical ways.

Self-Reflection Questions for Leaders

- † How well do I listen to and value the perspectives and experiences of others?
- † In what ways do I rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit in my interactions with others?

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)

My dear children, today is the Sixth Sunday of Easter! We continue to celebrate the joy of Jesus' resurrection and how he remains with us always. Today's readings tell us about love, peace, and the Holy Spirit, who guides us in our lives.

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)

Go now with your teachers and listen to God's Word and learn how much he loves you!

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

Readings

FIRST READING

Acts 15.1 2, 22-29

*It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you
no further burden than what is essential.*

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

- 1 Certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers,
"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses,
you cannot be saved."
- 2 And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with
them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up
to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders.
- 22 Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church,
decided to choose men from among their members
and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.
They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers,
- 23 with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders,
to the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings.
- 24 Since we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us,
though with no instructions from us,
have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds,
- 25 we have decided unanimously to choose representatives and send them to
you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,
- 26 who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas,
who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth.
- 28 "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no
further burden than these essentials: that you abstain from what has been
sacrificed to idols, and from blood and from what is strangled, and from
fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

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 67.1-2, 4-5, 6-7

R. Let the people praise you, O God, let all the people praise you!

- 1 May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,
- 2 that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations. **R.**
- 4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth.
- 5 Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you. **R.**
- 6 The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.
- 7 May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him. **R.**

SECOND READING

Revelation 21.10 14, 22:23

The angel showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

A reading from the book of Revelation.

- 10 In the spirit the angel carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.
- 11 It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal.
- 12 It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites;
- 13 on the east there were three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates."
- 14 And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.
- 22 I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.
- 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

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 14.23-29

The Holy Spirit will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Jesus said to his disciples:

- 23 "Whoever loves me keeps my word,
and my Father will love them,
and we will come to them and make our home with them.
- 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words;
and the word that you hear is not mine,
but is from the Father who sent me.
- 25 "I have said these things to you while I am still with you.
- 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit,
whom the Father will send in my name,
will teach you everything,
and remind you of all that I have said to you.
- 27 "Peace I leave with you;
my peace I give to you.
I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled,
and do not let them be afraid.
- 28 "You heard me say to you,
'I am going away, and I am coming to you.'
If you loved me,
you would rejoice that I am going to the Father,
because the Father is greater than I.
- 29 And now I have told you this before it occurs,
so that when it does occur, you may believe."

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

Acts 15.1 2, 22-29

*It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you
no further burden than what is essential.*

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

In the early Church, a disagreement emerged, when many non-Jewish people were becoming Christian. Some argued that the non-Jewish believers could not be saved without following specific Jewish customs. Paul and Barnabas, important leaders in the church, disagreed strongly with this teaching. They believed that Jesus' message was for everyone, no matter their background.

To settle the matter, the church sent Paul, Barnabas, and some other representatives to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles and elders. It was important to get their guidance on this important issue.

After much discussion and prayer, the apostles and elders, guided by the Holy Spirit, made a decision. They realized that it would be too burdensome to require non-Jewish Christians to follow all the Jewish laws. They understood that faith in Jesus is what truly matters.

They wrote a letter to the believers in all the churches explaining their decision. They decided not to impose all customs but asked Gentile Christians to avoid food sacrificed to idols, blood, meat from strangled animals, and sexual immorality. These guidelines were meant to promote unity and respect between Jewish and Gentile Christians.

The church sent Judas and Silas, along with Paul and Barnabas, to deliver the letter. When the church received it, they were very happy. The message brought them comfort, showing that God's love was for everyone and that extra rules weren't needed for God's acceptance.

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 67.1-2, 4-5, 6-7

R. Let the people praise you, O God, let all the people praise you!

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,
that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations. **R.**

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth.
Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you. **R.**

SECOND READING

Revelation 21.10 14, 22:23

The angel showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

A reading from the book of Revelation.

The Apostle John had a vision of a symbol of God's amazing plan. He saw a holy city coming down from heaven, shining with God's glory like a precious jewel and said it is like a New Jerusalem.

It had a huge wall with twelve gates, guarded by angels, bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The wall also had twelve foundations bearing the names of Jesus' apostles. This shows that God's promises and the teachings of the apostles are the foundation of this city.

The city didn't need the sun or moon because God's glory was its light.

The New Jerusalem is a picture of what heaven will be like: a beautiful place filled with God's presence, where we'll be close to God forever.

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 14.23-29

The Holy Spirit will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Jesus was surrounded by his closest friends at the Last Supper, speaking with deep love and reassurance. He tells them that if their love for him is real, it will show in how they live, in how they follow his teachings. And if they do, God himself will make his home within them, filling their lives with his presence.

Knowing he'll soon return to Heaven, Jesus promises a powerful gift: the Holy Spirit, whom he calls the Advocate. Picture the Holy Spirit as a wise guide, a constant companion, gently teaching them, helping them understand the deeper meaning of Jesus' words, and reminding them of everything he taught, exactly when they need it most.

Then, with tenderness, Jesus offers a gift unlike any other: his peace. Not the fleeting peace the world chases, but a deep, unshakable calm that settles the heart, even when surrounded by chaos. "Don't be troubled," he urges, "don't be afraid." This peace, he promises, will be their strength.

Finally, he reminds them of his departure, but with a promise of return. He wants them to trust that even in his absence, God's plan is unfolding. He encourages them to hold onto their faith, knowing that everything he's told them will come to pass.

In essence, Jesus offers a path: a path of love expressed through action, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and grounded in a peace that defies all circumstances, all rooted in the unwavering presence of God.

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.

Tips for Asking Questions:

- Use simple language.
- Give children time to think and answer.
- Be encouraging and positive.
- Don't be afraid to rephrase the question if they don't understand.
- Listen carefully to their answers and affirm their efforts.
- Relate the questions to their everyday experiences.
- Make it a conversation, not an interrogation!

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

Today is the Sixth Sunday of Easter. We've been celebrating Jesus' resurrection for weeks, and today's readings tell us more about how Jesus wants us to live after Easter. They're all about love, obedience, and the amazing gifts God gives us.

How can we show Jesus that we love him, besides just saying it?

Think about the first reading from the Book of Acts. Some people were arguing about whether new Christians needed to follow all the old Jewish rules. It was a big problem! But the apostles, who were Jesus' closest friends, got together and prayed to the Holy Spirit for guidance. They realized that what really mattered was believing in Jesus and loving one another. They decided not to make the rules too hard for the new Christians. This shows us that when we have disagreements, we should talk to each other, pray, and listen to the Holy Spirit to help us find the right answer.

Why did the apostles decide not to make the new Christians follow all the old Jewish rules?

Finally, in the Gospel, Jesus tells us something really important: "If you love me, you will keep my word." That means that if we truly love Jesus, we will try our best to follow his teachings and live as he wants us to. It's not always easy, but it's how we show him that we love him.

Jesus also promises to send the Holy Spirit, whom he calls the Advocate. The Holy Spirit will teach us everything and remind us of all that Jesus has said. The Holy

Spirit is like a super-helper who lives inside us, guiding us to make good choices and understand God's love. And Jesus gives us his peace, a peace that's different from the kind the world gives. It's a peace that helps us stay calm and strong, even when things are hard.

So, what does all this mean for us?

It means that Jesus wants us to:

Love Him: Show our love for Jesus by trying to follow his teachings every day.

Obey Him: Listen to what Jesus tells us in the Bible and through the Church.

Receive God's Gifts: Ask the Holy Spirit to guide us and give us peace.

This week, let's all try to do one thing each day to show our love for Jesus. Maybe we can help someone in need, be kind to our siblings, or say a prayer for someone who is hurting. And let's remember to ask the Holy Spirit to help us make good choices and to fill us with peace.

God loves us so much that He wants to give us all these amazing gifts. All we have to do is love Him back and try our best to follow Him.

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:

Let us bring our prayers before the Lord, knowing that God hears and answers them. Our response is, "Lord, hear our prayer." R: Lord, hear our prayer.

Assistant:

For the Church: That she may always be a welcoming home where all who love Jesus may feel the peace he promised, let us pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For World Peace: That the peace of Christ, which surpasses all understanding, may reign in the hearts of all people, especially in areas of conflict, let us pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For Our Community: That God may bless our families and community, making us instruments of His love and peace to those around us, let us pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For Those Who Suffer: That those who are troubled or afraid may find comfort in Jesus' promise of peace and the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For Understanding and Love: That we may grow in understanding and love, keeping God's word and allowing the Father and Jesus to make their home with us, let us pray to the Lord. R:

The Leader says:

Loving God, we thank you for hearing our prayers. Help us to love one another and to be kind to everyone we meet. We ask this through Jesus, your Son, who lives and reigns with you forever and ever. Amen.

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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