



# DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

## Children's Liturgy of the Word Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Overview

The readings this week present a beautiful unified message centred on God's universal call to salvation, the essential effort required to respond to this call, and the transformative nature of divine discipline. As these themes intertwine, they impart a profound understanding of salvation and God's desire for every soul to find redemption—an idea powerfully expressed in Isaiah and Psalm 117.

This universal call, however, is not one of passive acceptance; it demands a personal and active response. Jesus' admonition to "strive" evokes a sense of urgency and commitment, reminding us that the journey toward holiness is intentional and challenging. The author of Hebrews further emphasizes this by illustrating divine discipline as a necessary process that shapes and moulds us into the individuals we are meant to be.

The imagery of the "narrow door" is pivotal, as it signifies not exclusion but rather the focused effort required to navigate the path of holiness. It paints a picture of perseverance amid trials, suggesting that God lovingly accompanies us despite difficulties, refining our character and strengthening our resolve.

Ultimately, the message resonating through these readings is one of inclusive grace. It invites us to engage actively in our spiritual journey, underscoring the importance of diligent human cooperation and the transformative power of God's guidance. This call to salvation is both a gift and a responsibility, urging us to embrace the challenges that lead to spiritual growth and a deeper communion with the divine.

### Potential Key Words and Concepts for Children

**God's Big Family:** This concept comes from Isaiah and Luke, showing that God loves everyone worldwide and wants them all to be part of his special family in heaven.

**Everyone is Welcome:** Similar to "God's Big Family," this emphasizes that no one is left out of God's love because of where they live, what they look like, or what language they speak.

**Growing Strong:** From Hebrews, this explains that sometimes when things are hard or we make mistakes, God is helping us learn and become better, stronger people. It's like practicing to get good at something.

**Trying Our Best:** From Luke's Gospel, this is about the "narrow door." It means we must work hard and try our very best to follow Jesus, be kind, share, and make good daily choices. It's not always easy, but it's essential.

**Following Jesus:** This is the main way we "strive to enter the narrow door." It means listening to what Jesus taught and trying to live like him.

**Heaven/God's Kingdom:** This is the special place where God wants us all to be with him forever.

### Self-Reflection Questions

- † How can I express that God's love and call to salvation are for everyone, regardless of their background or faith journey?
- † Do I prioritize personal encounter and witness in my ministry, understanding that faith is transmitted "from one living person to another" and through consistency in my life?

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## Background

**Isaiah 66:18-21** proclaims God's expansive plan to gather "all nations and tongues" to see his glory. Isaiah emphasizes that God's salvation is not limited to one people but extends to the "coastlands far away that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory." It highlights God's intention to include people from diverse backgrounds, even taking some of them as "priests and as Levites," signifying a radical inclusivity in his divine service. This passage sets the stage for the universal scope of God's salvific will.

**Psalms 117** reinforces this theme of universality, serving as a joyful acclamation to "Praise the LORD, all you nations! Glorify him, all you peoples!" It underscores God's steadfast kindness and enduring fidelity, inviting all humanity to acknowledge and celebrate his boundless love.

**Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13** emphasizes that divine discipline helps us grow spiritually. It reminds us not to take the Lord's correction lightly, as "whom the Lord loves, he disciplines." Trials are not punishments but guidance from a loving father intended to help us "share his holiness" and produce "the peaceful fruit of righteousness." We are encouraged to strengthen ourselves and make straight paths for our feet, highlighting that growth comes from facing challenges.

**Luke 13:22-30** directly addresses the question of salvation's scope and the effort involved. When asked if "only a few will be saved," Jesus urges listeners to "Strive to enter through the narrow door." This imagery of a "narrow door" signifies that while salvation is offered to all, it requires an intentional, conscious and persistent effort to live according to God's will. Jesus warns against complacency, stating that merely having a superficial acquaintance with him ("We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets") will not suffice if one's actions are those of "evildoers." Crucially, Jesus reiterates the universal invitation, proclaiming that "people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God," echoing Isaiah's vision of a diverse multitude. The concluding remark, "some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last," challenges human assumptions about status and privilege, emphasizing that God's judgment is based on genuine commitment and righteousness, not worldly standing.

## The Liturgy

### Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

### Dismissal

**Priest: Today, you will hear about how God loves everyone, no matter where they come from, and how sometimes, even when things are difficult, God is helping us grow stronger.**

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 5 – 10 seconds

**Dear God, open our hearts and minds to hear your Word today. Help us understand your love for all people and grow closer to you. Amen.**

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

## Liturgy of the Word

### FIRST READING

Isaiah 66.18-21

*All your kindred, from all nations, will be brought to the Lord.*

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Thus says the Lord:

"For I know their works and their thoughts,  
and I am coming to gather all nations and tongues;  
and they shall come and shall see my glory,  
and I will set a sign among them.

"From them I will send survivors to the nations,  
to Tarshish, <sup>1</sup> Put, <sup>2</sup> and Lud <sup>3</sup>—which draw the bow—  
to Tubal <sup>4</sup> and Javan, <sup>5</sup>  
to the coastlands far away  
that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory;  
and they shall declare my glory among the nations.

"They shall bring all your kindred from all the nations  
as an offering to the Lord,  
on horses, and in chariots,  
and in litters, and on mules, and on dromedaries,  
to my holy mountain Jerusalem," says the Lord,  
"just as the Israelites bring a grain offering  
in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord."

"And I will also take some of them as priests and as Levites,"  
says the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

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<sup>1</sup> According to references in the Old Testament, Tarshish was a coastal nation or settlement, presumably on the Mediterranean.

<sup>2</sup> Ancient nation, descended from a man of the same name. It is commonly identified as Libya.

<sup>3</sup> Several biblical texts associate Lud with Egypt.

<sup>4</sup> A country and people in Asia Minor are mentioned only in association with Meshech.

<sup>5</sup> Location commonly identified with Greece.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 117.1, 2

**R.** Go out to all the world and tell the good news.

Praise the Lord, all you nations!

Extol him, all you peoples! **R.**

For great is his steadfast love toward us,  
and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. **R.**

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

Brothers and sisters:

You have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children—

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,

or lose heart when you are punished by him;

for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves,

and chastises every child whom he accepts.”

Endure trials for the sake of discipline.

God is treating you as children;

for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline?

Now, discipline always seems painful

rather than pleasant at the time,

but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness

to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore lift your drooping hands

and strengthen your weak knees,

and make straight paths for your feet,

so that what is lame may not be put out of joint,

but rather be healed.

The word of the Lord.

*A period of silence is observed after the reading.*



*People will come from east and west  
and eat in the kingdom of God.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Jesus went through one town and village after another,  
teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem.

Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few be saved?"

Jesus said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door;  
for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able.

"When once the owner of the house has got up and shut the door,  
and you begin to stand outside

and to knock at the door, saying,

'Lord, open to us,'

then in reply, he will say to you,

'I do not know where you come from.'

"Then you will begin to say,

'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'

But the Lord will say, 'I do not know where you come from;  
go away from me, all you evildoers!'

"There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth  
when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob  
and all the Prophets in the kingdom of God,  
and you yourselves thrown out.

Then people will come from east and west,  
from north and south,  
and will eat in the kingdom of God.

"Indeed, some are last who will be first,  
and some are first who will be last."

The gospel of the Lord.

*A period of silence is observed after the reading.*

## Adapted Liturgy of the Word for Children

### First Reading

Isaiah 66:18-21  
A Message from God

Leader: Our first reading today comes from the prophet Isaiah. A prophet is someone God sends to share an important message with people. In this message, God tells us something wonderful about his family.

(Read Isaiah 66:18-21 in a simplified and engaging way. You might say something like):

"For I know their works and their thoughts, and I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, says the Lord. I will set a sign among them, and from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Put, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the distant coasts and islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory; and they shall proclaim my glory among the nations. They shall bring all your kindred from all the nations as an offering to the Lord, on horses and chariots, in carts, on mules and dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord, just as the Israelites bring their offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord. Some of them I will take as priests and Levites, says the Lord."

### **What did we learn from Isaihah's story?**

God says he is going to gather all nations and all people! It doesn't matter where they live, their language, or their appearance. God wants everyone to know him and be part of his family. He even says he will choose people from these nations to be his special helpers. This shows us that God's love is for everyone, everywhere!

## Responsorial Psalm

### Psalm 117

*Praise the Lord, All You Nations!*

Leader: Now we'll sing or say a psalm, which is like a prayer. This psalm helps us praise God because his love is so big!

Leader: Our response today is: Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.

Leader: Praise the LORD, all you nations! Glorify him, all you peoples!

Children: Go out to the whole world and tell the Good News.

Leader: For steadfast is his kindness toward us, and the fidelity of the LORD endures forever.

Children: Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.

Leader: This psalm reminds us that God's love is strong and lasts forever. Because his love is for everyone, we should tell everyone about it!

Leader: Our next reading is from a letter written to some early Christians. It talks about how God helps us grow, even when things are tough.

*(Read Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13 in a simplified way. You might say something like):*

Do not dislike the Lord's discipline or lose heart when reproved by him; he disciplines those the Lord loves. Endure your trials as 'discipline'; God treats you as children. For what child is there whose parents do not discipline them?

At the time, discipline seemed a cause not for joy but for pain, but later, it brought the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those trained in it. So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees. Make straight paths for your feet, that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed."

The Word of the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

This reading might sound tricky, but it has a very important message. It tells us that when God "disciplines" us, it's not because he's mean, but because he loves us, just like a good parent helps their child learn and grow. Sometimes, learning new things or doing the right thing can be hard, and it might even feel a little painful, like when you have to practice an instrument or do your homework. But the reading says that later, all that hard work helps us become stronger and better people. It's like when you fall and scrape your knee, and it hurts, but then it heals, and your body gets stronger. God helps us heal and grow in our hearts and spirits.

## Gospel

### A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Luke 13:22-30

*The Narrow Door*

Now we come to the most special part of our readings, the Gospel! This is where we hear about Jesus. Please stand for the Gospel.

*(Read Luke 13:22-30 slowly and clearly):*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Children: Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus passed through towns and villages, teaching as he went and making his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, 'Lord, will only a few people be saved?' He answered them, 'Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough. After the master of the house has arisen and locked the door, you will stand outside, knocking and saying, 'Lord, open the door for us.' He will say to you in reply, 'I do not know where you are from.' And you will say, 'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers!' And there will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you cast out. And people will come from the east, the west, the north, and the south and recline at table in the kingdom of God. For behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

Children: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

## 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 the children a few minutes to respond.

In this Gospel, someone asks Jesus, "Will only a few people be saved?" And Jesus talks about a "narrow door." What do you think that means?

Allow for a few children's responses, guiding them gently.

Jesus isn't saying that God only wants a few people in heaven. Remember what we heard in the first reading from Isaiah? God wants everyone! But Jesus tells us that getting to heaven, or being close to God, isn't always easy. It's like a narrow door – we must try hard to "strive," as Jesus says. We must choose to follow Jesus, be kind, share, forgive, listen to God's rules, and love others. It takes effort, just like when you try to be good at something, like playing a sport or learning to read.

Jesus also says that people will come from "the east and the west and from the north and the south" to be in God's kingdom. This reminds us again of the first reading—God's family is for everyone, from all over the world! It doesn't matter where you come from, but how you live your life and whether you try to follow Jesus.

## Discussion Questions

**God's Big Family:** In the first reading, God says he will gather people from all nations. **What does this tell us about God's love?** (It's for everyone.)

**The Narrow Door:** Jesus talks about a "narrow door." **What are some things we can do daily to try to enter through that door and follow Jesus?** (e.g., be kind, share, forgive, pray, listen to parents/teachers.)

**Everyone is Welcome:** **How can we show others that God's love is for everyone, no matter who they are or where they come from?**

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: Now let's offer our prayers to God, who loves and hears us. The response is: Lord, hear our prayer.

1. For the Church throughout the world, that we may always welcome everyone and share God's love with all people, we pray to the Lord:  
All: Lord, hear our prayer.
2. For all leaders, that they may work for peace and justice for everyone, especially those who are poor or suffering, we pray to the Lord:  
All: Lord, hear our prayer.
3. For ourselves, that we may try our best to follow Jesus every day, even when it's hard, and grow stronger in our faith, we pray to the Lord:  
All: Lord, hear our prayer.
4. For our families and friends, and for all those who need our prayers, especially those who are sick or sad, we pray to the Lord:  
All: Lord, hear our prayer.
5. For all those who are suffering or in need, that God may hear their cries and send them help, we pray to the Lord: All: Lord, hear our prayer.
6. The leader may invite other intercessions from the children.

Leader: God, our loving Father, hear these prayers we offer with open hearts. We ask this through Christ our Lord. 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.

Liturgy adapted for Children.

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Acknowledgments:

LECTIONARY SUNDAYS AND SOLEMNITIES

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