



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

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

Overview

In this week's Gospel, Jesus challenges us to prioritize him above all else, including family and possessions. While this may seem difficult, it leads to a deeper freedom in living fully for God.

The first reading from the Book of Wisdom highlights our limited understanding, reminding us that we need God's guidance to grasp life's mysteries. True discipleship hinges on trusting in God's wisdom rather than our own.

In Paul's letter to Philemon, we see a practical example of following Jesus as he urges Philemon to accept Onesimus not just as a servant but as a brother in Christ. This illustrates how the Gospel transforms relationships and fosters community.

Jesus teaches that discipleship involves being willing to relinquish possessions. It doesn't require poverty, but emphasizes that our relationship with Christ should come first. When we let go of attachments, we make room for Christ in our lives.

While being a disciple is challenging, it is also the most rewarding journey, with blessings far outweighing any sacrifices we make.

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LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING

Wisdom 9.13-18

Who can discern what the Lord wills?

A reading from the book of Wisdom.

For who can learn the counsel of God?
Or who can discern what the Lord wills?
For the reasoning of mortals is worthless,
and our designs are likely to fail;
for a perishable body weighs down the soul,
and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind.
We can hardly guess at what is on earth,
and what is at hand we find with labour;
but who has traced out what is in the heavens?
Who has learned your counsel,
unless you have given wisdom
and sent your holy spirit from on high?
And thus the paths of those on earth were set right,
and people were taught what pleases you,
and were saved by wisdom.

The word of the Lord.

R. Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.

You turn us back to dust, and say,
“Turn back, you children of Adam.”
For a thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday when it is past,
or like a watch in the night. **R.**

You sweep them away; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning;
in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers. **R.**

So teach us to count our days
that we may gain a wise heart.
Turn, O Lord! How long?
Have compassion on your servants! **R.**

Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us,
and prosper for us the work of our hands. **R.**

Philemon 9b-10, 12-17

*Take him back, no longer as a slave
but as a much beloved brother.*

A reading from the letter of Paul to Philemon.

Beloved,

I, Paul, do this as an old man,
and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus.

I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus,
whose father I have become during my imprisonment.

I am sending him,
that is, my own heart,
back to you.

I wanted to keep him with me,
so that he might be of service to me in your place
during my imprisonment for the gospel;
but I preferred to do nothing without your consent,
in order that your good deed might be voluntary
and not something forced.

Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while,
so that you might have him back forever,
no longer as a slave but more than a slave,
a beloved brother—

especially to me but how much more to you,
both in the flesh and in the Lord.

So if you consider me your partner,
welcome him as you would welcome me.

The word of the Lord.

*Whoever of you does not give up all that he has
cannot be my disciple.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Large crowds were travelling with Jesus;
and he turned and said to them,
“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother,
spouse and children, brothers and sisters,
yes, and even life itself,
cannot be my disciple.
Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me
cannot be my disciple.
“For which of you,
intending to build a tower,
does not first sit down and estimate the cost,
to see whether he has enough to complete it?
Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish,
all who see it will begin to ridicule him,
saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’
“Or what king,
going out to wage war against another king,
will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand
to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand?
If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away,
he sends a delegation
and asks for the terms of peace.
“So therefore, whoever of you does not give up all their possessions
Cannot be my disciple.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Objectives:

- To help children understand that Jesus calls them to be his followers.
- To help children understand that following Jesus involves challenges and sacrifices, shown by "carrying one's cross."

Key Words and Concepts for Children

Discipleship: The readings emphasize what it means to truly follow Jesus. It's not always easy, and it requires putting God first.

Carrying Our Cross: This means accepting difficulties and challenges for Jesus' sake. It's about being brave and strong when things are hard, just like Jesus was.

Serve/Service: Helping others, doing good things for them, like Jesus did.

Choices: The decisions we make every day about how we live and who we follow.

Wisdom: Being smart about God's ways and making good choices.

Self-Reflection Questions

- † How does my commitment to Christ influence my daily life?
- † What "crosses" (challenges, sacrifices, difficulties) am I currently carrying?

Background

Wisdom 9:13-18b emphasizes the limitations of human understanding and the necessity of divine wisdom for comprehending God's will. It reflects a Hellenistic Jewish perspective, seeking to reconcile Jewish tradition with Greek philosophical thought. The author, often identified as Solomon, though likely a later anonymous writer, extols wisdom as a divine gift essential for righteous governance and understanding God's ways.

Psalms 90 is a prayer that reflects on the brevity of human life and God's eternal nature, seeking divine wisdom and favour. It is attributed to Moses, making it one of the oldest psalms. It is a meditation on human mortality in contrast to God's everlasting existence.

Philemon 9-10, 12-17 is a personal appeal for a runaway slave, Onesimus, whom Paul has converted to Christianity. This epistle was written during Paul's imprisonment. Paul sends Onesimus, who had run away from his master Philemon, back to him, but now as a fellow Christian brother rather than merely a slave. Paul appeals to Philemon not on the basis of command, but of love.

Luke 14:25-33 presents Jesus' challenging teachings on the demands of discipleship, emphasizing radical detachment and commitment. This section of Luke's Gospel follows Jesus' teachings on humility and hospitality. As large crowds accompany Jesus, he turns to them and lays out the stringent requirements for those who wish to be his disciples. These sayings are often referred to as the "costs of discipleship." Jesus uses hyperbole, stating that one must "hate" father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and even one's own life to be his disciple. This "hate" is understood not as animosity, but as a call to prioritize God above all earthly relationships and possessions. He also demands that disciples "carry their own cross," signifying a willingness to suffer and even die for him. Jesus illustrates this with parables of building a tower and a king going to war, emphasizing the need for careful calculation and full commitment before embarking on the path of discipleship. The passage concludes with the stark statement that anyone who does not renounce all possessions cannot be his disciple.

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 Jesus teach us about discipleship. Discipleship means living as a follower of Jesus. Go now with your leaders as young disciples of Jesus.

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, help us understand your Word today. Open our minds and hearts to follow Jesus, even when it is difficult.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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

Liturgy of the Word

Adapted Liturgy of the Word

FIRST READING

Wisdom 9

A reading from the book of Wisdom.

Who can learn the counsel of God?

Who can discern what the Lord wants?

Who has learned your counsel,
unless you have given wisdom
and sent your Holy Spirit?

You set the paths of those on earth,
and people were taught what pleases you,
and saved by wisdom.

The word of the Lord.

R. Lord, we live in you.

A thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday. **R.**

Teach us to count our days
that we may gain a wise heart. **R.**

Satisfy us in the morning with your love,
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
Let the favour of God be upon us. **R.**

A reading from the letter of Paul to Philemon.

Beloved,

I, Paul, am appealing to you for Onesimus.

I am sending him

so that he might be of service

during my imprisonment for the gospel.

If you consider me your friend,

welcome him as you would welcome me.

The word of the Lord.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Large crowds were travelling with Jesus.

He said to them,

Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me
cannot be my disciple.

The gospel of the 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 the children a few minutes to respond.

Our first reading comes from a book called Wisdom. It talks about how we can't truly understand God's plans all by ourselves. Imagine you're trying to solve a very, very difficult puzzle, but you only have a few pieces. It's hard, right?

How do you do it?

God's wisdom is like having all the puzzle pieces—even the picture on the box! We need God to send us God's Wisdom and the Holy Spirit so we can understand what pleases God and how to live according to God's plan.

How can we ask God for wisdom in our own lives? (What do we do when we talk to God?)

Our second reading is a letter from Saint Paul to his friend Philemon. Paul is writing about a man named Onesimus, who used to be Philemon's friend but left Philemon. Onesimus met Paul and became a Christian. Now, Paul is sending Onesimus back to Philemon, not only as a friend, but as a brother in Christ.

Paul asks Philemon to welcome Onesimus as he would welcome Paul himself. This teaches us about forgiveness, love, and seeing everyone as a child of God, no matter what they've done or who they are. It's about treating others with kindness and respect, just as Jesus taught us.

How can we show love to our friends and family, like Paul asked Philemon?

In today's Gospel, Jesus is walking with a large crowd and telling them something very important: what it means to follow him. He says that if we want to be his disciples, we must love him more than anyone else and be willing to carry our cross.

What does it mean to "carry our cross"?

It means that following Jesus isn't always easy. Sometimes it means making sacrifices, choosing what is right even when it's hard, or giving up something we like for God.

What is one thing you can do this week to show Jesus that he is the most important person in your heart?

What was your favourite part of today's Gospel?

What is one new thing you learned about God or about following Jesus today?

So, what do these readings tell us today?

We need God's wisdom: We can't figure out everything on our own. We need to ask God for his wisdom to know what is right and how to live.

Love and forgive others: Saint Paul teaches us to treat everyone with love and respect, seeing them as brothers and sisters in Christ, just as he asked Philemon to welcome Onesimus.

Follow Jesus with all your heart: Jesus wants us to put him first in our lives. It means being ready to make sacrifices and choosing him above everything else. It's a big commitment, but it's the most important one we can make!

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: Let us offer our prayers to God, who always listens to us.

The response is: Lord, hear our prayer.

1. For Pope Leo XIV, all bishops, priests and deacons, that they may guide us to follow Jesus with courage, we pray to the Lord:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For our families and friends, that we may always show them love and put God first in our homes, we pray to the Lord:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

3. For all children around the world, that they may learn about Jesus and grow in his love, we pray to the Lord:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

4. For ourselves, that we may be brave disciples of Jesus, willing to carry our crosses and follow him every day, we pray to the Lord:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

5. For those who are sick or sad, that God may comfort them and help them feel his love, we pray to the Lord: All: Lord, hear our prayer.

6. The leader may invite other intercessions from the children.

Leader: God our Father, you know what is in our hearts. Hear these prayers and help us to be true followers of your Son, Jesus.

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.

DID YOU KNOW?

THE WORLD OF LITURGY

11. *A fully Christian Life is inconceivable without participation in the liturgical services in which the faithful, gathered into a single assembly, celebrate the paschal mystery.*" (Directory for Masses with Children, 8)

12. To celebrate the liturgy of the word with children, we must understand the greater context in which the celebration takes place. [adapted].

The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is the single most important activity in the life of the Church and of individual Catholics. This is not to say that the Church's work in the world is unimportant, but simply that the Eucharist is the primary source of the Church's energy for carrying out its mission in the world.

Furthermore, the ultimate purpose of the Church's mission is to draw the world to the heavenly banquet whose earthly manifestation is the eucharistic banquet, the parish Sunday Mass.

Celebrating the Liturgy of the Word with Children, Guidelines for Practice, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Ottawa, On. Copyright @ Conacan Inc., 2006, p. 11 & 12

Liturgy adapted for Children.

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Acknowledgments:

LECTIONARY SUNDAYS AND SOLEMNITIES

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