



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

Children's Liturgy of the Word Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Overview

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a story about two men who go to the temple to pray. One is a Pharisee—respectable, religious, confident in his righteousness. The other is a tax collector—socially hated, morally compromised, and fully aware of it. The Pharisee prays, but it's not really a prayer. It's a performance. He thanks God—not for mercy—but for his own goodness. He compares himself to others and walks away, unchanged. The tax collector stands at a distance, won't even lift his eyes, and simply says: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Jesus says he is the one who goes home justified before God. The difference is humility.

This parable hits at the heart of what faith is really about. God isn't looking for people who pretend to have it all together. God is looking for honest people who know they need Him. The tax collector wasn't proud of his sin, but he owned it and opened himself to God's mercy. And here's the truth: God responds to humility with grace. Every time.

So today, don't worry about appearances or comparisons. Just present before God as we really are—flawed, struggling, but open. Because when we stop pretending, God starts healing.

READINGS

FIRST READING

Sirach 35.15-17, 20-22

The prayer of the humble pierces the heavens.

A reading from the book of Sirach.

The Lord is the judge,
and with him there is no partiality.
He will not show partiality to the poor
but he will listen to the prayer of one who is wronged.
The Lord will not ignore the supplication of the orphan,
or the widow when she pours out her complaint.
The person whose service is pleasing to the Lord will be accepted,
and the prayer of such a person will reach to the clouds.
The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds,
and it will not rest until it reaches its goal;
it will not desist until the Most High responds
and does justice for the righteous,
and executes judgment.
Indeed, the Lord will not delay.
The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

R. The poor one called and the Lord heard.

I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
let the humble hear and be glad. **R.**

The face of the Lord is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears,
and rescues them from all their troubles. **R.**

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.
The Lord redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned. **R.**

SECOND READING

2 Timothy 4.6-8, 16-18

*From now on,
there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness.*

A reading from the second letter of Paul to Timothy.

Beloved:

I am already being poured out as a libation,
and the time of my departure has come.

I have fought the good fight,

I have finished the race,

I have kept the faith.

From now on

there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness,
which the Lord, the righteous judge,

will give me on that day,

and not only to me

but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

At my first defense no one came to my support,
but all deserted me.

May it not be counted against them!

But the Lord stood by me

and gave me strength,

so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed

and all the Gentiles might hear it.

So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack

and save me for his heavenly kingdom.

To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

*The tax collector went home justified;
not so the Pharisee.*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Jesus told this parable
to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous,
and regarded others with contempt:
“Two men went up to the temple to pray,
one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.
The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus,
‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people:
thieves, rogues, adulterers,
or even like this tax collector.
I fast twice a week;
I give a tenth of all my income.’
“But the tax collector, standing far off,
would not even look up to heaven,
but was beating his breast and saying,
‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’
“I tell you,
this man went down to his home justified rather than the other;
for all who exalt themselves will be humbled,
but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Background

Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18 belongs to the genre of Wisdom literature from the Second Temple period. The passage reflects the sacrificial system that offerings were not merely ritual gestures but expressions of justice and solidarity with the vulnerable. God's ear is attentive to the "orphan" and "widow," figures who in the ancient world were most vulnerable. The faithful are called to bring to God not only material gifts but a heart attuned to justice.

Psalms 34 is a thanksgiving psalm. The opening verses link humility with joy, echoing Sirach's call to approach God "empty-handed." We are invited to bring our brokenness before God, trusting that He is attentive and ready to rescue. The psalm reinforces the need for a humble posture.

2 Timothy is Paul's farewell epistle to Timothy. The promise that "the Lord will rescue me from every evil work" mirrors the Psalmist's assurance of God's protection. Paul's confidence rests on the same divine fidelity that we see in the Old Testament promises to the poor. The reading urges the listener to remain steadfast in "faith" despite trials, models a life of sacrificial love, humility, and hope in the final reward.

Luke 18:9-14 Luke's Gospel often emphasizes reversal themes (the lowly exalted, the proud humbled). The tax-collector, despised by Jews for collaborating with the Roman occupiers, represents the ultimate outsider; the Pharisee epitomizes religious self-righteousness. The parable anticipates the Church's teaching that humility is the foundation of all virtues. We are invited to examine the motives behind their own prayers. True prayer, like that of the tax-collector, is a simple, honest turning toward God, acknowledging our need for His mercy. All of the readings converge on a single biblical principle: God meets us in our weakness, rewards sincere humility, and promises ultimate justice.

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: Dear children, today in the readings, we learn that God loves when we speak to Him with honesty and humility—not to show off, but to be real. 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

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

**Loving God,
Thank you for always listening to us.
Help us to pray with humble hearts,
not to look better than others,
but to grow closer to You.**

Amen.

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

ADAPTED READINGS FOR CHILDREN

FIRST READING

Sirach 35.15-17, 20-22

The prayer of the humble pierces the heavens.

A reading from the book of Sirach.

God listens to the prayers of those who are treated unfairly.

When someone is hurting and honestly cries to God,

God hears them.

Their prayers go straight to God.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

R. God hears the call of the poor.

God hears people who pray with honest hearts.

He saves them when they are in trouble.

He is close to those who are sad

and helps those who feel broken inside. **R.**

God protects people who do what is right.

He hears their cries for help.

The Lord will rescue them

from all their trouble. **R.**

SECOND READING

2 Timothy 4.6-8, 16-18

*From now on,
there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness.*

A reading from the second letter of Paul to Timothy.

St. Paul said,

My friends:

I have kept the faith.

And the Lord gave me strength.

The Lord will rescue you

and save you.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

*The tax collector went home justified;
not so the Pharisee.*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Jesus told a story to teach people who
thought that they were better than everyone else.

He said,

"Two men went to church to pray.

One was a Pharisee
and the other a tax collector,
someone whom people didn't like.

The Pharisee,
Who stood by himself, said,
'Thank you, God, that I am not like other people—
bad or dishonest.
Or even like this tax collector.

But the tax collector stood far away.
He didn't even look up to heaven,
but beat his chest and said,
'God, please forgive me. I have done wrong!

Jesus said, "I tell you,
God was pleased with the tax collector,
but not the Pharisee;
If you act like you are better than others,
you will be humbled,
but if you are humble,
God will lift you up."

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?

Who were the two people in the story?

Who thought he was better than the other?

Do you think that this ever happens today?

Let me tell you a story. There once was a girl named **Lena (change if necessary, do not single out a child)** who went to her parish's children's liturgy of the word. One day, the leader said, "Today, we're all going to take turns saying a prayer out loud."

Lena felt nervous. She had never prayed out loud before and didn't know any fancy words. She had heard other kids pray things like, "Heavenly Father, I thank You for Thy blessings and ask Thee for wisdom..." and Lena thought, "I can't talk like that!"

When it was her turn, Lena took a deep breath and quietly said: "Hi God. It's me, Lena. I just want to say thank you for helping me with my math test. And... please help my little brother feel better. That's all. Amen."

Some kids giggled. It was simple, short, and didn't sound very "churchy."

But the leader smiled and said, "That might've been the best prayer in the room—because it came straight from your heart."

Why do you think Lena's prayer was special?

Have you ever talked to God in your own words like that?

Do you think God cares more about fancy words or honest hearts?

God doesn't want us to pretend or show off when we pray. God just wants us to be real. Whether your prayer is big or small, long or short, if it comes from your heart, God listens.

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 bring our prayers to God, who hears every voice. Our response will be: Thank you, Lord.

1. For the Church, that we may be people who pray with humble hearts. We pray to the Lord. All: Thank you, Lord.
2. For people who are proud or mean to others, that they learn to be kind and honest. Let us pray to the Lord. All: Thank you, Lord.
3. For those who are sad, lonely, or feel too small to talk to God—that they know He listens. We pray to the Lord. All: Thank you, Lord.
4. For our own hearts, that we talk to God with love, not to impress others. We pray to the Lord. All: Thank you, Lord.
5. The leader may invite other intercessions from the children.

Leader: Jesus, thank you for teaching us that we don't have to be perfect for you to love us. Help us to speak to you honestly every day, with hearts that are kind and true. Through Christ our Lord. All: 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

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops 2500 Don Reid Drive Ottawa, ON K1H 2J2