



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

Fourth Sunday of Lent Children's Liturgy of the Word

The readings for the Fourth Sunday of Lent centre on the theme of light and darkness, weaving the day's readings into a cohesive spiritual meditation.

God perceives the depths of the heart. We see this in action from David's selection—God characteristically chooses the lowly to confound the mighty. We are called to see as God teaches Samuel to see: not appearances, but what is in the heart.

Sight is a metaphor for spiritual insight and faith; in John's gospel, believing constitutes real seeing—a way of encountering reality beyond the merely empirical. The blind man gains both physical sight and spiritual insight into Jesus, progressing from identifying him as "the man they call Jesus" to ultimately recognizing him as "the Son of Man," the object of faith.

Healing and reconciliation run through this week as well. God makes the first move—healing and forgiving before any response from those affected. Forgiveness and acceptance accompany healing, recognizing that God proves more willing to forgive and accept us than we often forgive ourselves—an opportunity during Lent to celebrate God's love and extend forgiveness to ourselves.

While the blind man gains progressive spiritual sight, the Pharisees grow progressively blinder, their refusal to believe exposed as spiritual blindness. The passage from Ephesians distinguishes children of light from children of darkness by their deeds, yet this dualism can become dangerous when claiming to be true children of light leads to crusades that expose darkness in others.

Background

1 Samuel 16.1b, 6-7, 10-13 God instructs Samuel to go to Bethlehem to choose a king from Jesse's sons. Samuel initially thinks Jesse's oldest son Eliab is the chosen one, but God reminds him that divine judgment differs from human judgment. After the first seven sons are not chosen, God identifies the youngest, David, who is tending sheep, as the one to be anointed. Samuel anoints David with oil, empowering him with the Spirit of the Lord. This passage emphasizes that God values character over appearance, providing Israel with the king they truly need.

Psalms 23 presents God's care through two images: a shepherd who provides for His people's needs and a gracious king who offers abundance. A shepherd leads sheep to green pastures and quiet waters, symbolizing well-being, rest, and renewal.

Ephesians 5.8-14 Paul addresses the Ephesians as those transformed from darkness into light through Christ, urging them to live as children of light by embodying goodness, righteousness, and truth. They should discern what pleases God, reflecting both personal conduct and engagement with the world. This establishes a dual responsibility: to live virtuously and to witness, inviting others from darkness into Christ's light. The light-and-darkness metaphor highlights both their internal transformation and their external mission.

John 9.1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38 Jesus encounters a man blind since birth, and when his disciples ask if the blindness is due to sin, Jesus says it's for God's works to be revealed. He makes mud, places it on the man's eyes, and instructs him to wash in the pool of Siloam. After doing so, the man can see. His neighbours struggle to recognize him and question how he regained his sight. The Pharisees interrogate him because the healing occurred on the Sabbath, sparking debate among them about Jesus' authority. The man ultimately declares Jesus a prophet. This story illustrates the shift from physical blindness to spiritual insight, contrasting the man's openness with the religious leaders' resistance and highlighting how meeting Jesus brings revelation.

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)

Children, Jesus speaks to us today about life-giving water, which he pours into our hearts. Go with your leaders and listen to Jesus.

Once most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the celebration site. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the CLoW room, 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 offer the following prayer, in these or similar words.

Holy Spirit, prepare us to hear you speak in the readings.

Let's quiet our hearts and make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amen.

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

READINGS

FIRST READING

1 Samuel 16.1b, 6-7, 10-13

A reading from the first book of Samuel.

The Lord said to Samuel, ¹ "Fill your horn with oil ² and set out; I will send you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons."

When the sons of Jesse ³ came, Samuel looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord." But the Lord said to Samuel,

"Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as humans see; the human looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here."

Jesse sent for and brought David in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one."

Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

¹ The last and one of the greatest Judges of Israel. He was a transitional figure who helped to end the tribal configuration of Israel and inaugurate the monarchy. Samuel fulfilled multiple roles in his lifetime: priest, seer, prophet, and judge. Scott Hahn, ed., *Catholic Bible Dictionary* (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 2009), 809.

² God directs Samuel to fill his horn with oil and travel to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons as king.

³ Jesse was an Israelite from Judah who lived in the eleventh century BC and became known as the father of King David.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 23.1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

R. The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul. R.

He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—they comfort me. R.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows. R.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long. R.

SECOND READING

Ephesians 5.8-14

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

Brothers and sisters:

Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.

Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it is said, “Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

GOSPEL

John 9.1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. He spat on the ground, mixed saliva with mud, and smeared it on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then the man who was blind went and washed, and came back able to see. The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet." They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out. Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he."

He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

REIMAGINED READINGS FOR CHILDREN

The reimagined readings below are intended for use after the children have heard the original reading. The intent is to allow the children to listen to the original reading and help them better understand it (not replace it).

Read at a minimum, the Gospel, which has the highest priority, and then ask the children to sit down. You can then read the reimagined reading. Leaders may not have time to read all of the reading. If time permits, after the Gospel, proclaim the Psalm, and then the first reading, if time permits.

Reimagined readers must always remain faithful to the original Scripture's intent, making it age-appropriate for children to understand.

FIRST READING

1 Samuel 16.1b, 6-7, 10-13

God said to Samuel, "Take your special oil and head to Jesse's house in our neighbourhood. I've picked a leader from his children."

Jesse lined up his older boys. First came Eliab, tall like a basketball star. Samuel thought, "Wow, this one looks perfect!" But God said, "Nope! Don't pick by height or cool clothes. People see the outside, but I check the heart."

Next, strong Abinadab, then speedy Shammah, and five more brothers—smart, funny, popular ones. God said "no" to all. Samuel asked, "Any other children?" Jesse replied, "Yes, little David. He's outside feeding our animals and helping with chores."

They called David in. He had rosy cheeks from playing outside, sparkly eyes full of kindness, and a big smile. God told Samuel, "Stand up and pour the oil on him. He's the one!"

Samuel poured the shiny oil on David's head while his brothers watched. Immediately, God's power filled David up strong, like getting super confident to lead and be brave every day.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalms 23.1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

R. The Lord is my shepherd

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul. R.

He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—they comfort me. R.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows. R.

SECOND READING

Ephesians 5.8-14

Once, you were like living in the dark, but now, because of Jesus, you are light! Live like children of light. That means doing things that are good, right, and true.

Try to learn what makes God happy. Don't join in bad things that are like darkness—they don't help anyone! Instead, shine your light to show them up. It's even embarrassing to talk about the secret bad stuff people do. But when light shines, everything shows up clearly—and anything you can see turns into light!

That's why we say: "Wake up, sleepyhead! Get up from being dead inside, and Jesus will shine his bright light on you!"

GOSPEL

John 9.1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

One day, as Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. Jesus made some mud with his spit, put it on the man's eyes, and said, "Go wash in the pool." The blind man went to the pool, washed the mud off, and came back seeing! He could see for the first time ever!

His neighbours were shocked. They said, "Isn't this the same guy who used to beg for money?" Some said, "Yes, it's him!" Others said, "No, he just looks like him." But the man said, "I am the man!"

They took him to the Pharisees (the religious leaders). This happened on the Sabbath day, when people weren't supposed to work. The Pharisees asked, "How did you get your sight?" He told them, "Jesus put mud on my eyes. I washed, and now I see!"

Some Pharisees grumbled, "This Jesus can't be from God. He worked on the Sabbath!" But others wondered, "How can a bad person do such a great miracle?" They argued a lot.

They asked the man again, "What do you think of Jesus?" He said, "He is a prophet!" The Pharisees got mad and yelled, "You were born blind because of sin! How dare you teach us?" They kicked him out.

Jesus heard about it and found the man. He asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (That's another name for Jesus.)

The man said, "Who is he, sir? Tell me so I can believe!"

Jesus smiled and said, "You have seen him. It's me—the one talking to you right now!"

The man was so happy! He said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshipped Jesus.

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:

Alternate Reflection

What did you hear? Allow children to respond.

Today's readings show us something amazing: God doesn't look at how we appear on the outside, like tall or strong. He looks deep inside our hearts to see our love and goodness. Jesus helps us "see" Him with our hearts, like turning on a bright light in the dark!

How does God see your heart?

Imagine a shepherd boy named David, the youngest in his family. God told the prophet Samuel to find a new king for Israel. Samuel saw David's big brothers—they looked strong and handsome! But God said, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature... the Lord looks on the heart." God picked little David because his heart was full of love for God. God sees your heart, too, even if you're small!

Jesus saw a man who had been blind from birth. His friends asked, "Who sinned?" Jesus said, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him." He made mud with spit, put it on the man's eyes, and said, "Go wash in the pool." The man obeyed, washed, and saw for the first time! What joy—like seeing colours and friends anew!

Everyone was shocked. The leaders argued, but the man said, "One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see." Jesus found him later and said, "Do you believe?" The man said, "Lord, I believe," and worshiped Him. Jesus is our light—He opens blind eyes and hearts so we can see God's love!

How can Jesus be your light?

These stories connect: God chose David by his heart, not looks. Jesus heals blindness to show He's the light. Even when people doubted, the blind man trusted and saw Jesus more clearly each time.

Like the blind man, what one thing do you know about Jesus?

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.

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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, concluding it with the cue for the response: 'We pray.' All respond to each petition by saying, "Lord, hear our prayer." Sample intercessions are below.

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

The leader says:

**God looks at our hearts just as David, the shepherd boy, did. Today, as children of light, we pray together for our Church family, the world, and each other
'Lord, hear our prayer.'**

R: Lord, hear our prayer.

Assistant:

**For the holy Church, that she may shine with light and grow in faith everywhere.
We pray to the Lord. R:**

Assistant:

**For all the world, especially children in trouble, that Jesus brings peace and light
where there is darkness. We pray to the Lord. R:**

Assistant:

**For our parents and families, that God blesses them and helps them show us
how to follow Jesus. We pray to the Lord. R:**

Assistant:

**For people who are blind or sick, like the man Jesus healed, that they may see
God's love and be made well. We pray to the Lord. R:**

Assistant:

**In the quiet of our hearts, we offer our own prayers... [pause]. We pray: Come,
Lord Jesus. R:**

The Leader says:

**God of love, look upon these prayers from pure hearts. We ask this through
Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Return to the church

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and reflect on what they have heard and what they are now doing. Be mindful of children who may have difficulty finding their families.



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Readings: Lectionary Sundays and Solemnities,
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