



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD Twenty-Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”

MATTHEW 16:24

Overview

Today's readings invite us into the heart of Christian discipleship: following Jesus means surrendering our lives to God.

In the first reading, the prophet Jeremiah experiences the cost of fidelity to God. He is ridiculed as he proclaims God's message, just like any of us, and he wants to remain quiet. However, God's word burns within him like "a fire shut up in my bones"; he cannot abandon the mission entrusted to him. His struggle reminds us that faithfulness does not always bring approval or ease. There are moments when living the Gospel requires courage, perseverance, and trust amid misunderstanding.

In the Gospel, Peter wants to protect Jesus from suffering, but human expectations still guide his good intentions. Jesus reveals that the way to resurrection passes through the cross. He then says, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Self-denial does not mean rejecting our dignity. It means refusing to let pride, resentment, comfort, possessions, or the desire for control become our master. The cross is accepted wherever love asks us to sacrifice, forgive, serve, or remain faithful.

Saint Paul calls this a "living sacrifice" and urges us not to be conformed to the world but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. Through this renewal, we learn to discern God's will and to recognize what is truly good.

The psalm gives us the deepest motivation: God's steadfast love is better than life itself. When Christ becomes our greatest treasure, sacrifice is no longer a meaningless loss. It becomes the path by which we discover true freedom, lasting joy, and life in God.

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Readings

First Reading

Jeremiah 20.7-9

A reading from the book of the Prophet Jeremiah.

O Lord, you have enticed me, and I was enticed; you have overpowered me, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me.

For whenever I speak, I must cry out, I must shout, "Violence and destruction!" For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long.

If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.

The word of the Lord.

Observe a period of silence after the reading.

R. My soul hirsts for you, O Lord my God.
O God, you are my God, I seek you.
My soul thirsts for you;
My flesh faints for you,
As in a dry and weary land where there is no water. **R.**

So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.
Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you. **R.**

So I will bless you as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call on your name.
My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips. **R.**

For you have been my help,
And in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.
My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me. **R.**

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

The word of the Lord.

Observe a period of silence after the reading.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you."

But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are thinking not as God does, but on human things."

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my follower, let him deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

For what will it profit anyone to gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

"For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each according to their work.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Background

Jeremiah 20:7-9 Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet during a very difficult period. God asked him to warn the people that their injustice, unfaithfulness and refusal to listen would have serious consequences. The people did not want to hear Jeremiah's message. They laughed at him, insulted him and rejected him. Jeremiah became discouraged and considered remaining silent. Nevertheless, God's word was so alive within him that Jeremiah described it as "a burning fire" within his heart. He could not keep it inside. Jeremiah's struggle shows that serving God does not always make life easier. Sometimes doing what is right brings criticism or rejection. Jeremiah did not speak because it made him popular; he spoke because God's word had taken hold of his heart.

Psalms 63: The psalmist compares the desire for God to the thirst of a person standing in a dry, weary land. Water is necessary for physical life; in the same way, friendship with God is necessary for our spiritual life. The psalmist does not merely want something from God. The psalmist longs for **God himself**—for God's presence, love and protection.

Romans 12:1-2 In Romans, Saint Paul describes God's mercy through Jesus Christ and urges Christians to offer their lives as a "living sacrifice," meaning they should dedicate their words, choices, and actions to God.

Matthew 16:21-27: Before this Gospel, Peter acknowledged Jesus as "the Messiah, the Son of the living God," but he didn't grasp the nature of Jesus' mission. Expecting a powerful Messiah, Peter objected when Jesus spoke of suffering and death. Jesus corrected him, emphasizing that Peter's role was to follow, not direct. He chose faithfulness to God's mission, understanding that the Cross and Resurrection are interlinked; suffering does not have the final say. Jesus taught that those who prioritize self-preservation will lose their lives, but those who give themselves for Him will discover true life. Genuine happiness arises from love, generosity, and fidelity, even at a cost. Following Jesus means embracing love and doing what is right, with Him guiding us toward new life.

Key Messages for Children

- † Jesus is always with us.
- † Choose what is loving and right.
- † Offer your life to God.

Key Messages for Leaders

- † Present discipleship as loving faithfulness.
- † Explain the Cross carefully.
- † Connect faith with children's daily lives.

Leader's Personal Reflection Questions

- When has following Jesus meant I had to make a tough but caring decision?
- How can I help children see the Cross as faithful love while assuring them that Jesus doesn't ask them to accept abuse or unsafe situations?

Takeaway

- ✓ Following Jesus means choosing love, even when it's hard.

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

At the proper moment, the priest invites the children to come forward. The leaders may come forward and stand facing the altar with the children. The priest then addresses the children.

Dear children, today we hear about the Cross. Go with your leaders and listen to what Jesus says about the Cross.

We will welcome you back soon.

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 help the children sit and prepare. **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.

Let us 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. (Silence for a few seconds.)

Loving God, open our ears to hear your Word, open our minds to understand it, and open our hearts to follow Jesus. Help us choose what is loving and right, 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, at a minimum, proclaim the Gospel.

REIMAGINED READINGS FOR CHILDREN

The 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 least the Gospel, then ask the children to sit down. You can then read the reimagined reading. Leaders may not have time to read all the reading.

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

First Reading

Jeremiah 20.7-9

Jeremiah said, "Lord, you called me, and I could not turn away from you. Your love was stronger than my fear. When I spoke your message, some people laughed at me and made fun of me. This made me feel sad. I decided that I would stop speaking about you. But your word was like a fire burning brightly inside my heart. I could not keep it hidden. I had to share your message and do what you asked of me."

R. My heart longs for you, O Lord my God.

O God, you are my God,
and I look for you.

I need you like dry ground
needs water. **R.**

I come to your holy place
and remember how great you are.
Your love is better than anything,
so I will sing your praise. **R.**

I will thank you every day.
I will raise my hands
and call your name.
Your love fills my heart with joy. **R.**

You have always helped me.
You keep me safe beneath your wings.
I stay close to you,
and you hold me in your loving hand. **R.**

My dear children, God has shown us great love. So give your whole life to God as a loving gift.

Use your hands to help, your feet to follow Jesus, your voice to speak kindly, and your heart to love others.

Do not simply do what others do when they do something wrong.

Let God change the way you think so that you can recognize and choose what is good.

This is how we love and worship God.

Jesus told his disciples, "I must go to Jerusalem. There I will suffer and die, but on the third day God will raise me to new life."

Peter said, "No, Lord! This must never happen to you!" Jesus answered Peter, "Come behind me and follow me. You are thinking only about what people want and not about God's plan."

Then Jesus said to all his disciples, "If you want to be my follower, do not think only about yourself. Take up your cross and follow me. Choose what is loving and right, even when it is difficult. If you give your life in love for me and others, you will discover true life. Having everything in the world cannot give you the life that God gives."

One day I will come in my Father's glory, and everyone will be rewarded for the good they have done."

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.

What did you hear?

Have you ever had to do something good that was difficult?

Maybe you shared a favourite toy, told the truth when you were afraid, apologized after hurting someone or included a child who was alone. Following Jesus is not always easy, but Jesus promises to help us.

In today's Gospel, Jesus told his friends that he was going to Jerusalem. Difficult things would happen to him there, but God would raise him to new life. Peter did not want anything bad to happen to Jesus. He told Jesus not to go. But Jesus knew that he must continue God's work of loving and saving everyone.

Who wanted to stop Jesus from going to Jerusalem? (Peter)

Why do you think Peter wanted to stop him? (Peter did not want Jesus to suffer.)

Jesus said, "If you want to be my follower, take up your cross and follow me." Taking up our cross does not mean that we must carry a large wooden cross. It means choosing what is loving and right, even when that choice is difficult.

If you broke something, would it be easy or difficult to tell the truth?

If someone hurt your feelings, how could you begin to forgive?

If your family asked you to help, how could you respond?

Every time we share, forgive, tell the truth, and help someone, we are following Jesus.

Jesus never asks us to accept bullying or allow someone to hurt us. If someone hurts us or makes us feel unsafe, we should tell a parent, teacher or another trusted adult. Jesus wants every child to be protected and loved.

Let us place one hand over our heart. Think quietly about one loving thing Jesus may be asking you to do this week. Pause for a moment. Now let us say together:
Jesus, help me choose what is loving and right, even when it is difficult. Amen.

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

The leader says:

Leader:

Jesus invites us to follow him and choose what is loving and right. Trusting that God hears us, let us offer our prayers to God. Our response is:

R. Children: Lord, hear our prayer.

1. For the Church: may all followers of Jesus share God's love through their words and actions, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For our families, teachers and friends: may God help us to be patient, forgiving and kind to one another, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

3. For people who are suffering, lonely, hungry or afraid: may they receive the help, comfort and friendship they need, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

4. For children who are bullied, hurt or feel unsafe: may they find the courage to speak to a trusted adult and receive protection and care, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

5. For the prayers we hold quietly in our hearts... (pause), we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader:

Loving God, you call us to follow your Son, Jesus. Give us courage when doing what is right is difficult. Help us to love, forgive and care for one another.

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.

Please note that the Handouts are available at:

Bulletin: TheKidsBulletin.com – Goodwill donation suggested

Quiz Handout provided by: thewordthisweek.net



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