



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

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

So the last will be first, and the
first will be last.

MATTHEW 20:16

Overview

We often measure life by comparison. We notice who received more attention, who was praised, who was invited, or who seemed to have an easier path. When we compare ourselves to others, gratitude can quickly turn into jealousy, and joy can be replaced by the feeling that life is unfair.

God invites us to see differently. God's love is not limited. When God blesses another person, our share of his love does not become smaller. When someone else succeeds, is forgiven, welcomed, or given a new beginning, we do not lose anything. God's goodness is abundant enough for everyone.

This truth is especially important for children. They are still learning that love is not a prize that must be won. A child may wonder why someone else received a reward, was chosen first, or received special attention. These moments can become opportunities to teach that each person is precious to God—not because of achievements, possessions, or popularity, but simply because God created and loves them.

God also sees those who feel forgotten or left out. No one is invisible to him. Every person has gifts to offer and a place in the community. Sometimes a person needs encouragement before recognizing those gifts. Sometimes a welcoming word or a small act of kindness helps someone understand that they belong.

We are called to become generous because God has been generous with us. We can share our time, listen patiently, forgive, include someone who is alone, and celebrate another person's happiness. These simple actions help make our families, schools, parishes, and communities more like the kingdom of God.

When jealousy arises, we can pause and pray: "Lord, thank you for blessing this person. Help me to rejoice with them and to recognize your gifts in my own life."

God's generosity frees us from competition and comparison. It teaches us gratitude, mercy, and joyful service. Each day, we are invited to receive his love and share it with others.

Readings

First Reading

Isaiah 55:6-9

A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah

Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

The word of the Lord.

Observe a period of silence after the reading.

R. The Lord is near to all who call on him.

Every day I will bless you,
and praise your name forever and ever.
Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
his greatness is unsearchable. **R.**

The Lord is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
The Lord is good to all,
and his compassion is over all that he has made. **R.**

The Lord is just in all his ways,
and kind in all his doings.
The Lord is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth. **R.**

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

Brothers and sisters: Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death. For me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer.

I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you.

Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

The word of the Lord.

Observe a period of silence after the reading.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus spoke this parable to his disciples. "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard.

When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock, he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.'

When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage.

Now, when the first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'

But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Background

Isaiah 55:6–9 God calls us to conversion, urging us to seek Him, abandon sinful ways, and return with confidence in His mercy. He abundantly pardons the repentant sinner, reminding us that His thoughts and ways surpass human expectations. In the Gospel, God's generosity extends even to those who come late. Trust in His mercy without limiting Him by human standards.

Psalms 145 praises God as great, gracious, merciful, and just, and encourages continual blessings. It highlights His goodness and emphasizes His nearness to those who sincerely call upon Him, showcasing His compassion and faithfulness.

Philippians 1:20–24, 27 St. Paul, despite being imprisoned, prioritizes the glorification of Christ in his life and death. His declaration—"For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain"—highlights his focus on Jesus. Although he yearns to be with Christ, he acknowledges that his continued life may benefit the Christian community. This prompts us to reflect on whether our lives are aimed at personal success or at serving Christ and others in all circumstances.

Matthew 20:1–16 The Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a landowner who hires workers at different times of the day. At the end of the day, all workers, including those who worked only one hour, receive the same daily wage. The early workers complain, but the landowner reminds them that he has treated them fairly and has the right to be generous.

The "daily wage" represents the gift of sharing in divine life, which isn't measured by human standards of merit. The parable highlights the danger of envy and comparison; while the early workers received what was promised, they resented the generosity shown to others.

The vineyard symbolizes God's people and the Church's mission, inviting everyone to participate, regardless of when they come. Salvation is a generous gift from God, not something we can claim as a right. Our response should be gratitude, not comparison.

Key Messages for Children

1. God loves every person completely.
2. God's love is not limited.
3. We do not need to compare ourselves with others.
4. God invites us to be generous.

Key Messages for Leaders

1. Present God's generosity as the central message. Help children understand that God's love is abundant and not reduced when another person receives a blessing.
2. Move children from comparison to gratitude. Encourage them to notice their own gifts rather than measuring themselves against others.
3. Emphasize inclusion. Every child should experience the liturgy as a place where they belong.
4. Connect faith with action. Generosity is shown through sharing, listening, helping, forgiving, welcoming, and giving time. Love becomes credible when it is expressed in real actions.
5. Avoid shame or harsh correction. If children express jealousy or complain about fairness, respond patiently. Use the moment to help them recognize their feelings and discover a more generous way of thinking.
6. Affirm that no one is forgotten by God. Children who feel overlooked need to hear that God sees them, values them, and gives them a place in the community.
7. Invite joyful service. Children do not need to do something impressive to serve God. Small acts of kindness can bear lasting fruit.

Leader's Personal Reflection Questions

1. How can gratitude for God's generosity help me serve more freely?
2. Where might jealousy, comparison, or a desire for recognition affect the way I serve the children?

Takeaway

God is generous to everyone, and we can share his love by being grateful, kind, and welcoming.

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.

Good morning, everyone! Today, Jesus tells us a story about workers in a vineyard. Some workers begin early in the morning, while others begin much later. At the end of the day, the landowner gives them all the same pay. Go with your leaders and listen to what Jesus teaches.

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 space, 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,
thank you for calling each of us
to be part of your family.
Help us to serve you joyfully,
to welcome others,
and to rejoice in your goodness.**

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.

READINGS FOR CHILDREN

A reader proclaims the approved text below. 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.

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

First Reading

Isaiah 55:6-9

Look for God and talk to him—he is always near!

When we make a wrong choice, we can say, “I’m sorry,” and turn back to God.
God is merciful and forgives us very much.

God’s thoughts are bigger and wiser than ours. God’s ways are higher than our ways, just as the sky is higher than the ground.

We may not always understand everything God does, but we can trust that God loves us and wants what is good for us.

R. The Lord is kind and loving to everyone.

Leader: Every day, we can thank God and praise him. God is great, and his love is wonderful.

All: The Lord is kind and loving to everyone.

Leader: God is patient with us. He is gentle and forgiving. God cares for every person and every part of his creation.

All: The Lord is kind and loving to everyone.

Leader: God always does what is right, and he is kind in everything he does. When we talk to God and pray sincerely, he is close to us.

All: The Lord is kind and loving to everyone.

Second Reading

Philippians 1:20-24, 27

Saint Paul says that Jesus is the most important person in his life. Whether he is living or facing death, he wants everyone to know how wonderful Jesus is.

Paul understands that being alive gives him a chance to help others. He can teach, encourage, share, and show God's love.

We can do this too! We live like Jesus when we are kind, helpful, honest, forgiving, and welcoming.

Let us try each day to live in a way that shows others how much Jesus loves them.

Observe a period of silence after the reading.

Jesus told a story about a vineyard owner who needed workers.

Some workers began early in the morning. Others came later—at lunchtime, in the afternoon, and even near the end of the day.

At the end of the day, the owner gave every worker the same pay. The workers who had started early became upset. They thought they should receive more.

But the owner reminded them that he had given them exactly what he had promised. He was also free to be generous to the other workers.

Sometimes we feel unhappy when someone else receives something good. We might think, "That's not fair! I want more!"

Jesus teaches us that God is generous and loves everyone. Another person's blessing does not make God love us less.

We can be happy when others are helped, included, or given a second chance. We can also share God's generosity by being kind, welcoming, helpful, and willing to share.

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.

Important Information for CLoW leaders at the appropriate time:

What did you hear?

Have you ever thought, "That's not fair!"?

Maybe someone got a bigger piece of cake, was chosen first, or received a prize. It can be hard when someone else has something good.

Jesus tells us about workers in a vineyard. Some worked all day. Others worked for only a short time. At the end of the day, the owner gave everyone the same pay. The workers who had worked all day were unhappy. But the owner had kept his promise to them. He was also generous to the others. Jesus teaches us that God is generous and loves everyone.

God's love is not like a cake that gets smaller when someone else has a piece. God has more than enough love for every person. When God is kind to someone else, he still loves us completely. Sometimes another child may need extra help, attention, or forgiveness. We can choose not to be jealous. Instead, we can be happy that they are being helped. We can share God's generosity by:

- including someone who is alone;
- sharing our toys;
- helping at home;
- forgiving someone who is sorry;
- saying kind and encouraging words.

What is one thing you can do today to help a friend who feels left out?

Think about a small act of kindness you can do right now.

When someone else gets a good thing, how can you show you're happy for them?

Try saying "I'm glad you have it!" or giving them a smile.

Remember that God loves you just as much as anyone else.

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: God is generous and loves every person. Let us bring our prayers to him with trusting hearts. Our response is: **R:/** Lord, hear our prayer.

1. For the Church, that we may welcome everyone with kindness and generosity, we pray: **R:/**
2. For our families and friends, that we may share, forgive, and help one another, we pray: **R:/**
3. For children who feel lonely, forgotten, or left out, that they may know they are loved, we pray: **R:/**
4. For ourselves, that God may give us generous hearts ready to share and serve, we pray: **R:/**
5. For our parish community, that we may rejoice when others are blessed and never be jealous, we pray: **R:/**

Invite the children to add their own intentions.

Closing Prayer

Generous God, thank you for loving us. Hear our prayers and help us to share your kindness with everyone.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

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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