



Liturgy of the Word with Children

Te Ritenga o te Kupu hei ngā Tamariki

Prepared by the Liturgy Centre, Catholic Diocese of Auckland

4th Sunday of Lent - Year B

Violet

'God sent his Son to save us'

Ephesians 2:4-10 Psalm 25 John 3:16-17

Have you ever rescued another person or an animal who got badly hurt? Have you ever given anyone a second chance after they had messed things up for you? Today we hear how God loves to rescue people and give them second chances.



Leader's Preparation

In preparation for leading this celebration, begin by reading and reflecting on the Scriptures for the Fourth Sunday of Lent, starting with the Gospel. (You may choose to use or focus on one reading only, but remember that the Gospel may not be omitted.) Then look through the preparatory material that follows and familiarise yourself with the Liturgy Outline.

GOSPEL

John 3:16-17

Jesus told Nicodemus: "God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never die. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn its people. He sent him to save them!"

Brothers and sisters:

God was merciful! We were dead because of our sins, but God loved us so much that he made us alive with Christ, and God's kindness is what saves you.

God raised us from death to life with Christ Jesus, and he has given us a place beside Christ in heaven above. God did this so that in the future world he could show how truly good and kind he is to us because of what Christ Jesus has done.

You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God's gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own. It isn't something you have earned, so there is nothing you can brag about.

God planned for us to do good things and to live as he has always wanted us to live. That's why he sent Christ to make us what we are.

PSALM

Psalm 25

Response: Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Show me your paths and teach me to follow;
guide me by your truth and instruct me. You keep me safe. **R.**

Please, Lord, remember, you have always been patient and kind.
Show how truly kind you are and remember me.

Scriptures from the Lectionary for Masses with Children (CEV)
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Background to the Readings for Leaders

God never gives up on us. As Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians, we are God's work of art., and it is only through his grace that we can be saved. The coming of Jesus proves that God is not out to condemn us. Today's Gospel reading emphasizes that God saves through love rather than condemnation. Any image of God as fierce, judgmental and condemning is a false one set up by those with unhealed condemnation in their own hearts.

Images from the Readings

- Be saved
- Gift
- Earned
- Be condemned

Reflection for Leaders

Today's readings are not easily understood by the children so try to give them the sense of what is there. There is in the readings today a certain sense of joy and thanksgiving for the saving love of a merciful God. So we have drawn for us in the first reading a picture of the justice of the saving God, the faithful are saved the unfaithful destroyed. In the letter to the Ephesians the imagery of life and death is used. "...We were dead because of our sins, but God loved us so much that he made us alive..."(CEV). The saving God shows mercy to the faithful and unfaithful alike. He brings those who were dead because of sin back to life through Christ, who is the light of life to those who believe.

Think about dark and light, think about the expression "I saw the light" think of some time of darkness in your life, like grief, anger, addiction or illness, how and when did light enter your darkness?

Reflect on what God's life-giving love does for us weak, sinful humans and on our joyful obligation in faith and hope to feed, clothe, shelter, and visit those in need.

We do not earn God's love or mercy; it is something that is there, a free gift for the taking, the fruits of faith. It is by grace that we are saved, not by anything we ourselves have done. We have to be open to God's work in our lives, yes God's love is always there ready and waiting for us and we have a part to play. We say yes to opportunities to grow God's love in our lives. This is God's free gift... all we can do is accept or reject the love and forgiveness God offers.

God doesn't stop loving us if we fail or do wrong or live as if there is no God. God is always there, is constant.

Reflecting on the Readings with the children

Before Sunday read over the suggested discussion points given in the Leader's Liturgy Outline.
With the 8-12 year olds: First, listen to the children's own responses to the Reading/s and then, if needed, use some of the discussion starters suggested.

With the 5-7 year olds: Adapt some of the questions in the 8-12 material and then join with the older group for the 'Liturgical Action'.

Suggested Focus

Prepare a focus for the area where the children's Liturgy of the Word is to be held:

Violet cloth, Lectionary, a candle and a red cross on a white background or a St John Ambulance cross...

God loves us and sent
his Son, Jesus.



LEADER'S LITURGY OUTLINE

4th Sunday of Lent - Year B

At a suitable moment after the Opening Rites, but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are presented with the Children's Lectionary and a candle and sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION – Pōwhiri I invite the children to join in the procession for their celebration of the Liturgy of the Word.

To the Minister of the Word: Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

Receive this candle as the light of Christ who is present in his Word.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS – Te Kapa o te Pukapuka Tapu

WELCOME – Ko te whakatau

Leader: O God, when we were baptised you called us to be your children, to be your light in the world so that others would see us and know of your love. Help us to be a light of faith and hope for others to see.

R Amen.

First Reading: Ephesians 2:4-10

(if used)

The Word of the Lord / Ko te Kupu a te Ariki
Thanks be to God / Whakamoemiti ki te Atua

Psalm 25

Response:

Remember your mercies, O Lord.

(or another suitable response known by the children)

Praise the God of all com-pas-sion, Lord of hea-ven, Lord of earth.

He is king of all cre-a-tion, he is mer-cy, he is love.

Gospel: John 3:16-17

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John
Children: **Glory to you, O Lord / Korōria ki ā koe, e te Ariki**

At the end of the Gospel: The Gospel of the Lord
Children: **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ / Kia whakanuia rā koe, e te Ariki, e Hēhu Karaiti.**

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH THE CHILDREN – Whai Whakaaro

8-12 year olds: *Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.*

- Has anyone ever tried to rescue a bird or a worm, dog, cat, snail? — Invite one or two of these stories to be told.
 Children, particularly, are ready to rescue small creatures, even if the hope of recovery seems slight. Adults too are good at doing such rescues. We think it's worth having paramedics to race to where someone has had an accident and to try and save someone's life. Whenever we do this we behave like God our Father. It is God's character to want to rescue and save.
- God never gives up on us, why not?
 The cross is the symbol that tells us that God stays with us until the very end.

5-7 year olds: Adapt some of the questions in the 8-12 material and then join with the older group for the 'Liturgical Action'

LITURGICAL ACTION – Ko te Ritenga Karakia

Have a cross set up and invite the children to touch it while someone prays the following prayer...

“Thank you for loving us
and staying with us.
Help us to stay with you.”



PROFESSION OF FAITH – Panui o te Whakapono

We believe in God the Father,
who made the whole world.
We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
who was born in Bethlehem
and lived among us,
who died on the cross for us,
and rose from the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit
who brings life and love to us all.
We believe that the Church is one family,
and that one day
we will share everlasting life
with God in heaven.
Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL – *Te Īnoinga o te Hunga Whakapono*

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: With joyful hearts let us pray to God for our needs:

- For the Church, the sign of God's love in the world, that all people will be drawn in and welcomed.

Let us pray to the Lord R Lord hear our prayer
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

- That people of all races live together in peace and harmony.

Let us pray to the Lord R Lord hear our prayer
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

- For the sick, the weak and the elderly.

Let us pray to the Lord R Lord hear our prayer
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

- For forgiveness, that we may give it and receive it.

Let us pray to the Lord R Lord hear our prayer
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

Leader: Ever loving God, you show love for your people, send your love into our lives and the lives of those for whom we pray in faith through Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen**

The children re-join the assembly before the prayers over the gifts.