



Liturgy of the Word with Children

Te Ritenga o te Kupu hei ngā Tamariki

Prepared by the Liturgy Centre, Catholic Diocese of Auckland

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Green

“Blessed are the poor in spirit”

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13, Psalm 146, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, Matthew 5:1-12ab

If you could have anything you wanted to make you happy, what would you choose? How long do you think you would feel happy? Some people spend all their lives trying to find the secret of happiness. Often they look for fame and fortune, but these things can still leave people feeling empty. Jesus wanted his followers to know about the things that make us truly happy forever. He gives us a picture of the qualities that God desires his people to have. These are sometimes called the ‘Beatitudes’, which means blessed or happy.



Leader’s Preparation

In preparation for leading this celebration begin by reading and reflecting on the Scriptures for the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, 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

Matthew 5:1-12ab

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the side of a mountain and sat down. Jesus’ disciples gathered around him, and he taught them:

“God blesses those people who depend only on him. They belong to the kingdom of heaven!

God blesses those people who grieve. They will find comfort!

God blesses those people who are humble. The earth will belong to them!

God blesses those people who want to obey him more than to eat or drink. They will be given what they want!

God blesses those people who are merciful. They will be treated with mercy!

God blesses those people whose hearts are pure. They will see him!

God blesses those people who make peace. They will be called his children!

God blesses those people who are treated badly for doing right. They belong to the kingdom of heaven

God will bless you when people insult you, mistreat you, and tell all kinds of evil lies about you because of me.

Be happy and excited! You will have a great reward in heaven.”

FIRST READING

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

If you humbly obey the Lord, then come and worship him. If you do right and are humble, you might be safe on that day when the Lord shows his anger.

I won't destroy any of you that are truly humble and come to me for safety.

The people of Israel who survive will live right and refuse to tell lies. They will eat in peace, and no one will bother them.

PSALM

Psalm 146

Response: Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs!

God always keeps his word.

He gives justice to the poor and food to the hungry. **R**

The Lord sets prisoners free and heals blind eyes.

He gives a helping hand to everyone who falls.

The Lord loves good people and looks after strangers. **R**

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

My dear friends, remember what you were when God chose you. The people of this world didn't think that many of you were wise. Only a few of you were in places of power, and not many of you came from important families.

But God chose the foolish things of this world to put the wise to shame. He chose the weak things of this world to put the powerful to shame.

What the world thinks is worthless, useless, and nothing at all is what God has used to destroy what the world considers important.

God did all this to keep anyone from bragging to him.

You are God's children.

He sent Christ Jesus to save us and to make us wise, acceptable, and holy. So if you want to brag, do what the Scriptures say and brag about the Lord.

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

The first reading from the prophet Zephaniah calls people to seek humility and integrity. It is through small and humble things that many people have found holiness. The Beatitudes continue this theme, but they are such a paradox that they can only be understood in the light of faith in God. They are at the heart of the Christian message and they are diametrically opposed to the way of the world. In fact, they reverse the understanding that wealth and power were signs of God's blessing, and poverty and suffering indicated God's punishment. This automatically puts Christians into conflict with the accepted norms of society. Only Matthew's account has Jesus giving this teaching on a mountain, the perfect complement for the new law of Jesus as the completion of the Law of Moses, given on Mount Sinai so many generations before.

Images from the Readings

- *God's values, opposite those of the world*
- *humbly obeying and worshipping*
- *justice to the poor*
- *God chose the foolish things to shame the wise*
- *Brag about the Lord*

Reflection for Leaders

We find it hard to view poverty, mourning, hunger and persecution as blessings, and we are called to do all we can to alleviate the sufferings of others. Yet Jesus is showing us that all these sufferings reveal to us our need for God; and we can identify that those who are prosperous, comfortable and content find it much more difficult to really believe. Money, comfort and satisfaction can prevent us from seeing that without God we are lost, and human happiness without God is very transient. Those who embrace the concept of the Beatitudes – those who are not self-satisfied, who mourn over sin, who long for God's justice and peace, those who do not judge others and are quick to forgive, those are the ones who are living the way that God desires people to live. Who do you know who embodies one of the beatitudes? Which of the beatitudes touches you most deeply at this present moment? Recall a personal experience of loss that illustrates for you the impermanent or unsatisfying nature of human happiness. What message did you take from your suffering? During this week identify and consciously practice at least one way of showing humility in your daily life. It might be something like avoiding contradicting others, or not making excuses, or respecting other people's opinions.

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'.

With both age groups you may also choose to use the 'Chorus Play' on page 8 to reinforce the Gospel message.

Suggested Focus

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

Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle, a wrapped present



LEADER'S Liturgy Outline

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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, Jesus shared the secret of everlasting happiness with us. Help us to live by your values and share this happiness with others.

R Amen.

First Reading: Jephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

(if used)

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

Psalm 146 (if used)

Response: Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs!

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

(if used)

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

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

Both older and younger children come together for the liturgical action this week.

Re-read the Beatitudes.

Invite the children to hold hands and pray for each other in all their difficulties.

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 Inoinga 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: God is so good! With gratitude, let us ask our faithful God to bless us with every good gift:

- That our leaders in the church and the government will treat all people with respect and dignity

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

- That the values Jesus teaches us in the Beatitudes become the measuring stick for the way we live as Christians

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

- For a spirit of humility in all our relationships with others
Let us pray to the Lord **R** **Lord hear our prayer**
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**
- For the courage to reach out and help all those who mourn and grieve
Let us pray to the Lord **R** **Lord hear our prayer**
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

Leader: God of blessings, hear the prayers that we make for ourselves and others through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: **Amen.**

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

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Chorus Play

Matthew 5:1-12

Note to leaders: The following **chorus** plays are appropriate to use with children and young people of **any age**.

Needs updating for Beatitudes

People required: Reader, Chorus.

Leader: The response is, 'Come follow me.'

Chorus: 'Come follow me.'

Reader: Jesus said to the disciples,

Chorus: 'Come follow me.'

Reader: Jesus said to Simon Peter

Chorus: 'Come follow me.'

Reader: Jesus said to Andrew,

Chorus: 'Come follow me.'

Reader: Jesus said to James,

Chorus: 'Come follow me.'

Reader: Jesus said to John,

Chorus: 'Come follow me.'

Reader: Jesus says to us,

Chorus: 'Come follow me.'

From 'Just Imagine 4, Many Creative ways of presenting Scripture' written by Rina Wintour, Mountjoy Enterprises, www.mountjoyenterprises.com.au. Available from the Liturgy Centre.