



Liturgy of the Word with Children

Te Ritenga o te Kupu hei ngā Tamariki

Prepared by the Liturgy Centre, Catholic Diocese of Auckland

Fifth Sunday of Lent, Year A

Violet

“I believe that you are Christ, the Son of God.”

Ezekiel 37: 12-14, Ps 130, John 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 31-45

Do you sometimes stop to think about what you believe? When you pray, do you believe that God will answer your prayer? Sometimes, God answers our prayers in a different way to what we were expecting. That can be difficult for us. However, God is always there, loving us and listening to us.



Leader's Preparation

In preparation for leading this celebration, begin by reading and reflecting on the Scriptures for the Fifth 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 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 31-45

Martha and her sister Mary sent a message to the Lord and told him that his good friend Lazarus was sick.

When Jesus heard this, he said, “His sickness won’t end in death. It will bring glory to God and his Son.” Jesus loved Martha and her sister and brother. But he stayed where he was for two more days. Then he said to his disciples, “Now we’ll go back to Judea.”

When Jesus got to Bethany, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. When Martha heard that Jesus had arrived, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed in the house. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Yet even now I know that God will do anything you ask.” Jesus told her, “Your brother will live again!”

Martha answered, “I know that he will be raised to life on the last day, when all the dead are raised.” Jesus then said. “I am the one who raises the dead to life! Everyone who has faith in me will live, even if they die. Do you believe this?”

“Yes, Lord!” she replied. “I believe that you are Christ, the Son of God. You are the one we hoped would come in the world.”

Many people had come to comfort Mary, and when they saw her quickly leave the house, they thought she was going out to the tomb to cry. So they followed her. Mary went to where Jesus was, Then as soon as she saw him, She kneeled at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

When Jesus saw that Mary and the people with her were crying, He was terribly upset and asked, "Where have you put his body?" They replied, "Lord, come and you will see."

Jesus started crying, and the people said, "See how much he loved Lazarus."

Jesus was still terribly upset. So he went to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone rolled against the entrance. Then he told the people to roll the stone away. But Martha said, "Lord, you know that Lazarus has been dead four days, and there will be a bad smell."

Jesus replied, "Didn't I tell you that if you had faith, you would see the glory of God?"

After the stone had been rolled aside, Jesus looked up toward heaven and prayed, "Father, I thank you for answering my prayer. I know that you always answer my prayers. But I said this so that the people here would believe that you sent me."

When Jesus had finished praying, he shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" The man who had been dead came out, His hands and feet were wrapped with strips of burial cloth, and a cloth covered his face. Jesus then told the people, "Untie him and let him go."

Many of the people who had come to visit Mary saw the things that Jesus did, and they put their faith in him.

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 37: 12-14

The LORD said to Ezekiel:

Tell the people that I, the LORD God, promise to open their graves and set them free, so they can go home to their land.

When I let them out of their graves, they will know that I the LORD.

My Spirit will give them breath.

They will live again, and I will bring them back home.

Then they will know that I, the LORD God, have kept my promise.

PSALM

Psalm 130

Response: *With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.*

From a sea of troubles I call out to you, LORD.

Won't you please listen as I beg for mercy? **R**

With all my heart, I am waiting, LORD, for you!

I trust your promises. God is always merciful,

And he has the power to save you **R**

While my enemies watch, you honour me as your guest,
and you fill my cup until it overflows.

Your kindness and love will always be with me each day of my life. **R**

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

Mary, Martha and Lazarus are sisters and brother, friends of Jesus, living in Bethany close to Jerusalem, just over the Mount of Olives. When Lazarus takes ill, in simple faith the sisters send for Jesus. They are aware of his reputation as a compassionate healer. But Jesus does not respond as expected; he waits until Lazarus is well dead before arriving. Jewish belief was that the soul of the deceased was still present for three days after death, so four days indicates that Lazarus is well past being able to be resuscitated. The onlookers wonder why Jesus had not cured Lazarus before he died. Yet Jesus performs a great wonder- he resurrects Lazarus from the tomb. Some of the witnesses come to greater faith in Jesus, but others are alarmed. The religious leaders of the day are becoming more alarmed by the threat that Jesus poses to them. Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem, his passion and crucifixion, is drawing to its inexorable conclusion. But the call to new life in him becomes stronger. For those without faith, the tomb is a place of decay. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the power of sin and death is broken, and new and eternal life offered to all who believe.

Images from the Readings

- *His good friend was sick*
- *Do you believe?*
- *Terribly upset*
- *You always answer my prayers*
- *They will live again and I will bring them back home*

Reflection for Leaders

Of the amazing miracles that Jesus performed during his ministry, this is surely the greatest. It is the one which cemented the enmity of the Jewish leaders against him. It is ironic that by demonstrating that he is the source of life he seals his death sentence. Much of what Jesus reveals of the Kingdom of God is in opposition to worldly values. Often for ourselves also, it is the challenges of life that offer us the most potent growing experiences. Can you think of any 'death' experiences that have led to some sort of transformation or 'new life' for you? Just as strips of burial cloth bound Lazarus, often our experiences of life leave us tied and knotted up. What areas in your life need to be unbound? What aspects of your true self have you buried in the course of your life? How might Jesus help resurrect there? Who are the 'life-giving' people or occasions in your life? Try to be 'life-giving' to others this week with positive affirmation.

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, strips of cloth

LEADER'S LITURGY OUTLINE

Fifth Sunday of Lent, Year A

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, you are the life of the world. As your life grows in us and changes us, help our faith to grow stronger too. Amen

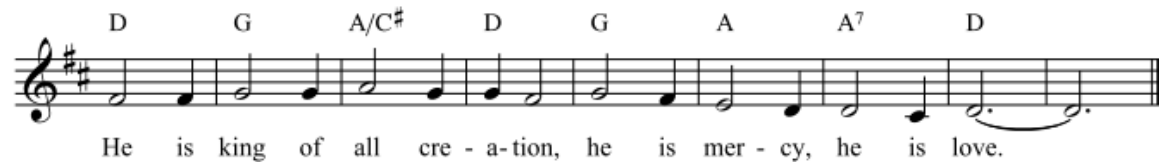
R Amen.

First Reading: Ezekiel 37: 12-14

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

Psalm 130 (if used)

Response: With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.



Gospel: John 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 31-45

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**

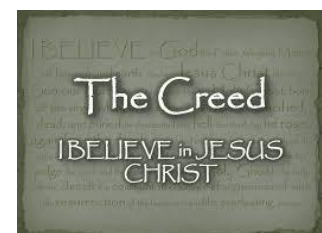
At the end of the Gospel: The Gospel of the Lord
Children: **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ / Kia whakanuia rā koe, e te Ariki, e Hēhu Karaiti.**

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.

- *Have you ever seen a tadpole become a frog, or caterpillars change into a butterfly, or something else get a new life? It can be quite amazing. Even though we know that these things happen, it can still be an exciting surprise when it does. Today's reading is like that. It is about resurrection to new life. When their brother died, how would Martha and Mary have felt? Can you remember what we are told about how Jesus felt too? Does it surprise you to think of Jesus having friends and crying when they die?*
- *What did Jesus do before he called Lazarus out of the tomb? (He prayed aloud to God). Why did he do this? (so the people there would believe that God sent him, and God would be glorified)*
- *What is Jesus teaching us with his story? (That we too will have a new life because we believe in him and trust him).*
- *Sometimes it is hard to believe when we haven't seen things for ourselves. If you had been there and seen it, would you have believed more than you did before?*

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*

Invite the children to use the words of Martha to pray as an act of worship:

“I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

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: We have heard the words of life. Let us now bring our prayers to God in confidence and trust:

- That the Church will be life giving to all and glorify God
Let us pray to the Lord **R** **Lord hear our prayer**
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**
- For the strength and courage to openly live and speak our faith in Jesus
Let us pray to the Lord **R** **Lord hear our prayer**
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**
- For wisdom to see clearly the way that God wants us to live
Let us pray to the Lord **R** **Lord hear our prayer**
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

- That we will not bind others up with our own selfishness
Let us pray to the Lord **R** **Lord hear our prayer**
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

- For ourselves, our families and our friends, that we will always care for each other
Let us pray to the Lord **R** **Lord hear our prayer**
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

Leader: God, source of all life, help us to live our lives fully. Bless and protect us and those for whom we pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: **Amen**

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