



# Liturgy of the Word with Children

Te Ritenga o te Kupu hei ngā Tamariki

Prepared by the Liturgy Centre, Catholic Diocese of Auckland

## Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A Green

### 'Forgive one another'

Sirach 28:2-5, 6b-7, Psalm 103, Romans 14:7-9, Matthew 18:21-35

*Have you ever had to forgive someone when they have done something wrong to you? Sometimes it is hard to forgive others. Today Jesus tells us that if we want God to forgive us then we must first learn to forgive each other.*



### Leader's Preparation

In preparation for leading this celebration begin by reading and reflecting on the Scriptures for the Twenty-Fourth 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 18:21-37

Peter came up to the Lord and asked, "How many times should I forgive someone who does something wrong to me? Is seven times enough?"

Jesus answered: "Not just seven times, but seventy-seven times! This story will show you what the kingdom of heaven is like:

"One day a king decided to call in his officials and ask them to give an account of what they owed him. As he was doing this, one official was brought in who owed him fifty million silver coins. But he didn't have any money to pay what he owed. The king ordered him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all he owned, in order to pay the debt.

"The official got down on his knees and began begging, 'Have pity on me, and I will pay you every cent I owe!' The king felt sorry for him and let him go free. He even told the official that he did not have to pay back the money.

"As the official was leaving, he happened to meet another official, who owed him a hundred silver coins. So he grabbed the man by the throat. He started choking him and said, 'Pay me what you owe!'

“The man got down on his knees and began begging, ‘Have pity on me, and I will pay you back.’ But the first official refused to have pity. Instead, he went and had the other official put in jail until he could pay what he owed.

“When some other officials found out what had happened, they felt sorry for the man who had been put in jail.

“Then they told the king what had happened. The king called the first official back in and said, ‘You’re an evil man! When you begged for mercy, I said you did not have to pay back a cent. Don’t you think you should show pity to someone else, as I did to you?’

“The king was so angry that he ordered the official to be tortured until he could pay back everything he owed. That is how my Father in heaven will treat you, if you don’t forgive each of my followers with all your heart.”

## FIRST READING

Sirach 28:2-5, 6b-7

If you forgive your friends when they mistreat you, your prayers will be answered and your sins forgiven. If you stay angry with someone, don’t expect the Lord to heal you. Don’t ask God to forgive you, if you don’t have pity on others. God won’t forgive you, if you stay angry at someone. So stop holding grudges and start obeying God. Think about the commands and the promise of God Most High. Then forget about the sins and the ignorance of others.

## PSALM

Psalm 103

**Response:**            **The Lord is kind and merciful.**

With all my heart I praise the Lord,  
and with all that I am I praise his holy name!  
With all my heart I praise the Lord!  
I will never forget how kind he has been.

The Lord forgives our sins, heals us when we are sick,  
and protects us from death.  
His kindness and love are a crown on our heads.

How great is God’s love for all who worship him?  
Greater than the distance between heaven and earth!  
How far has the Lord taken our sins from us?  
Farther than the distance from east to west!

## SECOND READING

Romans 14:7-9

Brothers and sisters: Whether we live or die, it must be for God, rather than for ourselves. Whether we live or die, it must be for the Lord. Alive or dead, we still belong to the Lord. This is because Christ died and rose to life, so that he would be the Lord of the dead and of the living.

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

The words on forgiveness from the first reading are underlined by the Gospel today, and the second reading calls for our behaviour to be modified by our call as Christians. Many of the things Jesus taught directly opposed the norms of behaviour of the day, and of human nature in general. Today's Gospel continues this call to rise above mediocrity. Forgiving someone seven times, as Peter was advocating, was a generous effort at mercy. But Jesus demands a higher standard for his followers, and illustrates it with this story of the unforgiving servant. The king forgives the impossibly enormous debt of one of his officials out of compassion, but the forgiven man refuses to match this treatment when dealing with the debt of another. He resorts to violence, and so loses the mercy that has previously been offered him. Notions of fairness are challenged as Jesus leads his listeners to the understanding that God's treatment of us correlates with our treatment of others.

## *Images from the Readings*

- must I forgive?
- cancel the debt
- forgive from the heart
- stop holding grudges
- we belong to God

## *Reflection for Leaders*

Forgiveness always sounds very holy and pious, but when it comes to being wronged ourselves we can find that our feelings get in the way. Can you recall a time when you experienced this? How did you respond, and what happened? Were you able to forgive? When you consider this, think about how you forgive and experience forgiveness in your place of work, your home, your community. Does this story help you to move past an initial response into a place where God's mercy can be manifest towards other people? During the week, work on the things that need healing and reconciliation in your life.

## *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:  
*Green cloth, Lectionary, a candle and a cross*



# LEADER'S LITURGY OUTLINE

## Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, 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 kind and forgiving. Fill us with your spirit of generosity so we can share your love and mercy with others.

**R** Amen.

*First Reading: Sirach 28:2-5, 6b-7 (if used)*

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

*Psalm 103*

**Response:** The Lord is kind and merciful  
(or another suitable response known by the children)

*Second Reading: Romans 14:7-9*

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

General: Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia. Fill us O Lord with your word.\_\_\_\_

Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia. Your word is life for our souls.

### Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

**Minister of the Word:** A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

**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.*

- Think about this question, but don't tell us about it. Have you ever been in big trouble, maybe at school or home?
- In today's story Jesus tells about a man who was in big trouble. He owed a lot of money and was let off.
- What do you think about the man's behaviour?
- What happened to the man at the end? (he was thrown into jail and tortured until he could repay what he owed)
- Why did Jesus tell this story? (Peter wanted to know how many times he must forgive people who had hurt him. Jesus told the story to explain)
- How many times did Jesus say? (seventy-seven times)
- What do you think Jesus meant? (Jesus doesn't mean we have to count, he is saying we must **always** forgive)
- What else does Jesus tell us about forgiving in this story? (How we forgive each other will determine how God forgives us)
- Is it easy to forgive someone? Sometimes it is the hardest thing in the world to do.

- Can you remember last week we talked about the special sacrament of forgiveness that we have? It is called Penance or Reconciliation. Why do we have this sacrament (it helps us to forgive and be forgiven)
- What does this tell you about God?

**5-7 year olds:** Adapt some of the questions in the 8-12 material and, if time allows, use the 'chorus play' on page 8 to help them understand the Gospel message.

## *LITURGICAL ACTION – Ko te Ritenga Karakia*

*Jesus taught his friends a very special prayer which speaks of forgiving:*

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
 hallowed be thy name.  
 thy kingdom come,  
 thy will be done  
 on earth as it is in heaven.  
 Give us this day our daily bread.  
**and forgive us our trespasses,**  
**as we forgive those who trespass against us;**  
 and lead us not into temptation,  
 but deliver us from evil. Amen



## *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 know that God loves us, so let us pray for others and ourselves:

- That people who need to know God's love and forgiveness will be welcomed by God's family, the Church  
Let us pray to the Lord **R** Lord hear our prayer  
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**
- That we learn to be generous with each other and tolerant of our differences  
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 let go of feelings of anger and bitterness when we have been hurt or wronged by others  
Let us pray to the Lord **R** Lord hear our prayer  
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**
- For all who are hungry, or sad, lonely or sick.  
Today we pray for \_\_\_\_\_  
Let us pray to the Lord **R** Lord hear our prayer  
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

**Leader:** Forgiving God, you show us your mercy every day. Listen to these prayers that we your children bring to you through Jesus Christ your Son

**All:** Amen

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

# Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

## Chorus Play

Matthew 18:21-35

How often should we forgive?

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

### What is a Chorus play?

A Chorus play presents a Scriptural story in the form of a play with both individual characters and a chorus. The chorus aspect allows for whole group participation. One of the aims of chorus plays is to provide not only a presentation of the story but also – and more importantly – an informed interpretation of it. There are many excellent sources of material available today to assist interpretation, especially Biblical commentaries.

**People required:** Peter, Jesus, Reader, King, Servant.

- Peter:** Hey Jesus! If someone does something to hurt me, how often should I forgive them? Three or four times: Five or six times? No more than seven times, eh?
- Jesus:** Seven times? You're kidding right?
- Peter:** No! Go on tell me, how often should I be willing to forgive someone?
- Jesus:** Peter, Peter. Not seven times!
- Peter:** Then how often?
- Chorus:** **How often?**
- Jesus:** Always!
- Peter:** Always? What do you mean *always*?
- Chorus:** **Always?**
- Jesus:** You must always be ready to forgive, Peter. That's the way it has to be.
- Peter:** Always! You're kidding right?
- Jesus:** Not only must you forgive one another but it must be sincere!
- Chorus:** **Be sincere!**
- Peter:** I have to really mean it then?
- Jesus:** That's it.
- Peter:** You wouldn't happen to have a little story that might help would you?
- Jesus:** Funny you should ask!
- Peter:** I just knew it!
- Reader:** Once there was a king with many servants. One of the servants owed the king a lot of money.
- Chorus:** **How much is 'a lot'?**



**Reader:** About sixty million dollars.

**Chorus:** **Wow! That is a lot of money.**

**Reader:** The servant, naturally, had no way of repaying the debt.

**Chorus:** **What did the king do?**

**King:** Sell the servant! Sell his wife! Sell his children! Sell everything he has! Just get me my money!

**Servant:** Give me time, master, just give me some time. I will find a way to repay you every last cent.

**Reader:** And you wouldn't – you couldn't – believe what the king did!

**Chorus:** **Sold the whole family?**

**Reader:** No, he forgave him and cancelled his debt!

**Chorus:** **Deleted the debt. Awesome!**

**Reader:** But that's not the end of the story. Straight away, this very same servant met up with another servant who owed him just a little money.

**Chorus:** **How much is 'a little'?**

**Reader:** About two hundred dollars.

**Chorus:** **Wow! That's not much. What did the servant do?**

**Reader:** He began to rough him up.

**Servant:** Pay me what you owe me and pay me NOW or else!

**Chorus:** **What happened?**

**Reader:** There was no way the other servant could pay up – so he was thrown into jail.

**Chorus:** **That's no very compassionate!**

**Reader:** The king eventually heard about what had happened and was very angry. He called the first servant and said,

**King:** I was willing to forgive you a debt of sixty million dollars and yet you refused to forgive a debt of only two hundred dollars!

**Reader:** The king was angry!

**Chorus:** **Angry!**

**King:** You worthless servant! You can go to jail until you repay me every last cent!

**Chorus:** **Off to jail!**

**Reader:** And the message is . . .

**Chorus:** **Always be ready to forgive!**

*From 'Just Imagine 4, Many Creative ways of presenting Scripture' written by Rina Wintour, Mountjoy Enterprises, [www.mountjoyenterprises.com.au](http://www.mountjoyenterprises.com.au). Available from the Liturgy Centre.*