



Liturgy of the Word with Children

Te Ritenga o te Kupu hei ngā Tamariki

Prepared by the Liturgy Centre, Catholic Diocese of Auckland

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

White

‘God loves us and sent his Son, Jesus’

Numbers 21:4-9, Psalm 78, John 3:13-17

The Gospel reading of this day gives us the reason for Jesus coming to earth. “God loved the world so much.” Jesus is the visible expression of God’s unconditional love for us. Everyone who believes that Jesus came, lived and died for us and was raised to new life, will live forever.



Leader’s Preparation

In preparation for leading this celebration begin by reading and reflecting on the Scriptures for The Exaltation of the Holy Cross, 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 3:13-17

Jesus told Nicodemus:

“No one has gone up to heaven except the Son of Man, who came down from there. And the Son of Man must be lifted up, just as the metal snake was lifted up by Moses in the desert. Then everyone who has faith in the Son of Man will have eternal life.

“God so loved the people of this world 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!

FIRST READING

Numbers 21: 4-9

One day the people of Israel got angry and started insulting Moses and God. They said, "Did you bring us out of Egypt just to let us die in the desert? There's no bread or water in this place. We are sick of this awful food!"

So the Lord sent poisonous snakes to attack the people, and many of them were bitten and died.

The others came to Moses and said, "We were wrong to insult you and the Lord. Please pray for the Lord to take these snakes away."

Moses prayed for the people. Then the Lord said, "Make a snake out of bronze and put it on a pole. The people who are bitten can look at the snake and they won't die." So Moses made a bronze snake and put it on a pole. Everyone who looked at the snake lived, even after being bitten by a poisonous snake.

PSALM

Psalm 78

Response: Do not forget the works of the Lord!

Give ear; O my people, to my teaching;
Incline your ear to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings from of old.

When they were being killed, the people looked for God;
They were sorry for their sins and sought him earnestly.
They remembered that God was their rock,
The Most High God their redeemer

Second Reading not included this week.

God loves us and sent
his Son, Jesus.

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

The people of Israel had rebelled against God and Moses in a particularly scandalous way, forgetting God's mercy and faithfulness, they accuse him of having brought them out of Egypt to die in the desert. The venomous snakes were recognised as a punishment of God. Their repentance opens the way for God to bring healing by telling them to make and look at a bronze snake on a pole. It is God who heals. This incident foreshadows the later events of the Gospel. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is the means by which God's plan of salvation can be effected. Jesus speaks with Nicodemus, echoing the story of Moses with the bronze snake to illustrate the significance of God's mercy and limitless love. Jesus shares his knowledge of the things of heaven. The Gospel reveals the triumphant cross that brings salvation to all who have faith in Jesus Christ

Images from the Readings

- *A bronze snake on a pole*
- *Jesus lifted up*
- *God gave his only Son*
- *Jesus was sent to save and not condemn*

Reflection for Leaders

For those who have received baptism, the lifting up of the Son of Man brings eternal life, just as those who looked upon the metal snake lifted up in the desert received healing. It is in the 'lifting up' that we recognise Jesus' true nature, which draws everyone to himself. God pardons sin and the cross is a triumph which reveals that 'God is love' and illuminates the path that leads to blessing and life.

Today's Gospel story is a revelation to Nicodemus of God's love. Yet it requires a look of faith to recognise in the cross the sign of salvation. It does not ignore sin, since sin was the cause of Jesus' death, but by realising the gravity of sin we also realise the depth of God's mercy and love. Have there been times when I have received healing in an unexpected way? In what ways do I show mercy and love to those who have caused me hurt?



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:

Red cloth, Lectionary, a candle and a crucifix



LEADER'S LITURGY OUTLINE

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

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 sent your Son to save us because you love us so much. Help us to be generous and unselfish with each other

R Amen.

First Reading: Numbers 21:4-9

(if used)

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

Psalms 78

Response: **Do not forget the works of the Lord!**
(or another suitable response known by the children)

D G Bm A D G Asus⁴ A
 General: Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia. Fill us O Lord with your word.____
 Bm G D A G A D
 Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia. Your word is life for our souls.

Gospel: John 3:13-17

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

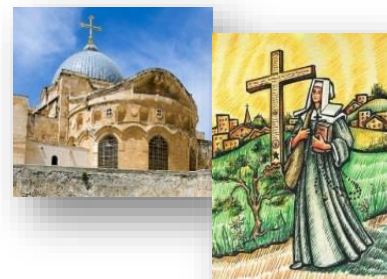
Children:

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.

- You might like to build on these questions: Where are you likely to see a symbol of a cross? (church, school, home, jewellery)
- Christian people use a cross to remind them of the healing power of God's love. How did that healing power work for Moses and the people bitten by the serpent?
- How did the healing power of God's love reach Jesus when he was on the cross? (God raised Jesus to new life in the resurrection) How does the healing power of God's love reach us now? (When we, who believe in Jesus look at the cross we are reminded that God reaches down to us in our suffering and finds a way to raise us to new life just like he did for Jesus)
- You may like to tell the children the story of Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine who is said to have discovered the true cross on Sept 14, 320. This day commemorates the building of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which is built on the sites of Calvary and the tomb where Jesus was laid. Constantine legalised Christianity in the Roman Empire in 313AD



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'

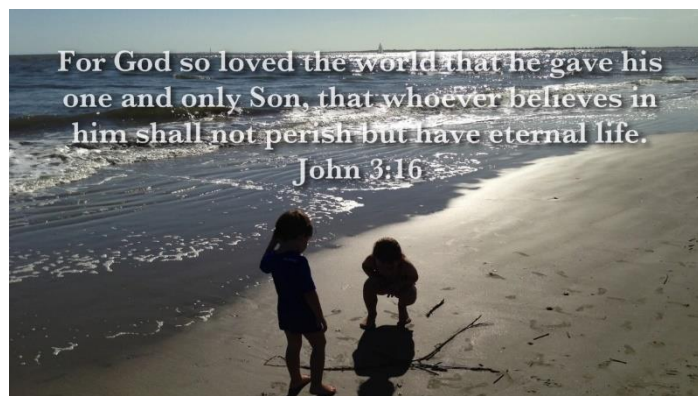
LITURGICAL ACTION – Ko te Ritenga Karakia

Join hands together
and bow to the Cross
before making the sign of the cross together



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: God of mercy and second chances, hear the prayers that we make as we try to live by your ways. We bring them to you through Jesus Christ your Son

- That the leaders of the Church will be given wisdom and courage to lead God's people

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

- That people who are sick and alone will find comfort in Jesus

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

- That people of Aotearoa-New Zealand will work for justice and peace

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

- That we will share the hope we have with others

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

Leader: God of mercy and love, we ask you to hear the prayers that we your children make to you through Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Amen

The children rejoin the assembly before the prayers over the gifts.