

December 9, 2018

Second Sunday of Advent

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

Today's Readings

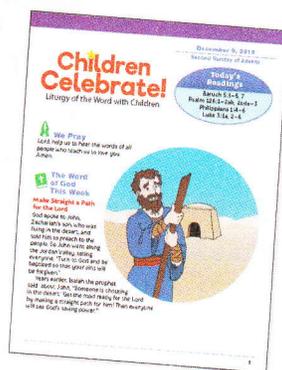
Baruch 5:1–5, 7
Psalm 126:1–2ab, 2cde–3
Philippians 1:4–6
Luke 3:1a, 2–6

Make Straight a Path for the Lord

Preparation

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.



Prepare with Prayer

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits and I hope for his word.
My soul looks for the LORD more than sentinels for daybreak.
More than sentinels for daybreak. (Psalm 130:5–6)

Scripture Background

An enemy kicks you when you're down, but a friend tries to pick you up. In today's First Reading, God speaks as the Chosen People's true friend by promising them better days ahead during the mournful period of their exile in Babylon.

It should be noted, however, that when Nebuchadnezzar began deporting the Jews in 597 bc, it was not Israel's entire population that was affected by the order. Rather, only its leading citizens were sent away. Israel's poor and uneducated remained behind to reside in the land and to feel the shame and oppression of foreign occupation.

Today's Second Reading is a passage from one of Paul's letters written in prison. His main consolation while behind bars comes from knowing of the lively faith that still thrives in the Christian community he founded in Philippi some 10 years earlier. Composed between AD 59 and 63, Paul's letter expresses the belief, common among Christians of the time, that Christ's Second Coming is imminent.

In today's Gospel, Luke pointedly draws a comparison between John the Baptist and prophets of old. He does so by identifying John as one called by God in verse 2 and by

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a violet cloth, place:

- ▶ a Lectionary
- ▶ a battery-operated candle
- ▶ a green plant or fresh flowers

In red crayon, write on five or six sheets of newsprint the names of various sins: lying, stealing, fighting, disrespecting God's name, etc. Then create paper "boulders" by crushing each sheet into a ball. Scatter them over a pathway from one side of the room to the other. Have a blindfold ready.

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

Gathering: "The Promise Part 2" (Seeds CD-2, Track #3) or "The Promise Part 2" (Promise & Good News CD-1, Track #2)

Gospel Acclamation: "Alleluia" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)

quoting from Isaiah in verses 4-6. John's prophetic message is that the Messiah is coming, but only to people who clear a pathway for him. Through Jesus, God will indeed work miracles and reveal marvels, but these mighty deeds will be seen only by the poor in spirit and the pure of heart.

Children's Connections

Although some of the children are too young to know the Ten Commandments by heart, much less what they mean, today's homily offers a good opportunity to remind them of the behaviors appropriate for people who want Jesus to be part of their lives. Here are a few bad habits that young children sometimes pick up, along with the commandments against them:

- ▶ using God's name disrespectfully, being noisy or fussy in God's house (1st and 3rd)
- ▶ throwing tantrums, disobeying elders, or talking back (4th)
- ▶ fighting with other children, calling them names, or bullying them (5th)
- ▶ taking things without asking, not returning lost items, not sharing treats or toys (7th)
- ▶ lying to get out of trouble (8th)

Your homily will be effective if you (1) focus on bad habits that you personally have noticed in the children of your community, and (2) tell stories or give examples of the corresponding good habits that you want children to develop.

Educator Howard Kirschenbaum has noted that the "just say no" approach to moral education fails if used all by itself. Children must get real practice in exercising the virtues. They must be surrounded by others' good example, and they must be continually reminded of what's expected of them.

For example, the elementary principal who, during morning announcements, thanks the students who turned in a lost wallet, provides a vital link in the complete chain of instruction that children need. (See Kirschenbaum's article, "A Comprehensive Model For Values Education And Moral Education.")

More About ...

The Catechism on the Nature of Sin

- Sin is caused by a "failure in genuine love for God and neighbor" and "a perverse attachment to certain goods." (#1849)
- Sin hurts the ones sinning, the ones sinned against, and "injures human solidarity." (#1849)
- Sin involves displacing upon oneself God's final authority in matters of good and evil; it is like saying, "I know better than God does what is and is not sin." (#1850)
- The story of Christ's Passion and Death reveals some of sin's many forms: the Jews' unbelief, hatred, shunning, and mockery of Christ; Pilate's cowardice; the soldiers' cruelty; Judas' betrayal; Peter's denial; and the disciples' flight. (#1851)
- In humanity's darkest hour, however, the crucified Lord is humanity's greatest hope. His sacrifice "secretly becomes the source from which the forgiveness of our sins will pour forth inexhaustibly." (#1851)

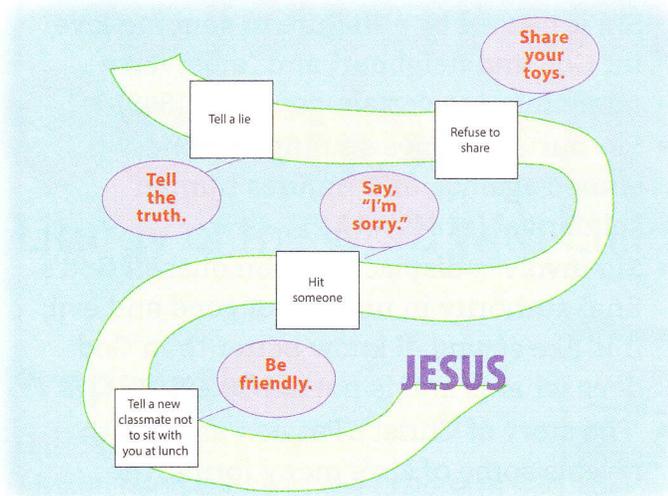
The Children's Leaflet

The leaflet for this week helps children learn about John the Baptist, through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

Leaflet Activity

Children will learn some ways that we can help prepare the way for Jesus' coming on Christmas.



The Liturgy of the Word

Gathering

After the gathering song has ended, show the children the pathway strewn with "boulders." Ask a blindfolded volunteer to walk across the room without touching or kicking any of the boulders blocking the way. The person should walk very slowly and listen for directions from the group. The group will call out "Wrong way!" anytime the person gets close to a boulder. After the game is finished, ask these questions:

How well did the volunteer do?

How much did the group's directions help the volunteer?

Tell the children that you will have more to say about this game during the homily. Then ask the children to gather the boulders and place them under the table in the worship area.

Collect

Leader: Invite the children to bow their heads repeat after each line. Then pray:

"Get the road ready for the Lord!" In the desert someone is shouting, "Get the road ready for the Lord!"

Children: Get the road ready for the Lord!

Leader: Make a straight path for him. Get the road ready for the Lord!

Children: Get the road ready for the Lord!

Leader: Straighten the crooked paths and smooth out the rough roads. Get the road ready for the Lord!

Children: Get the road ready for the Lord!

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

Leader: In ancient times, the city of Jerusalem suffered an attack by its enemies, and many of its people were taken away in chains. Listen to today's First Reading, in which the prophet Baruch tells the city that its suffering is over and its people are free to return home.

Read Baruch 5:1–5, 7. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

Children: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning, sing or announce the response.

Leader: The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Children: The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Leader: Read Psalm 126:1–2ab, 2cde–3.

Second Reading

Leader: In today's Second Reading, Saint Paul writes to some people who have been helping him spread the good news about Jesus Christ. As he talks to them, try to imagine that he is talking to you, the children of this parish—because anytime you do what is right, you also help spread the good news.

Read Philipians 1:4–6. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

Children: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

Leader: In today's Gospel, Saint John the Baptist tells people to clear a path for the Lord Jesus. John has a good point, for how can Jesus come to us if we put things in his way?

The Lord be with you.

Children: And with your spirit.

Leader: A reading from the Gospel of Luke.

Children: † Glory to you, O Lord.

Leader: *Read Luke 3:1a, 2-6. Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."*

Children: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Remind the children that after the opening activity, you had asked them to clear away the boulders. Now pick up a "boulder," unfold it, and read aloud what is written inside. Explain that it is a sin we must clear out of our lives if we want to be ready for the Lord Jesus when he comes. Do the same with the other boulders.

Conclude your talk by pointing out that, in real life, the Church acts as the group did in shouting out directions to the blindfolded volunteer. The Church tells us to avoid the sins that can block the pathway between God and us.

Profession of Faith

Leader: Please stand for the Profession of Faith, and answer each question with, "Yes, I do believe." Do you believe that God, the loving Creator, made you and keeps watch over you?

Children: Yes, I do believe.

Leader: Do you believe that Jesus, God's beloved Son, came to Earth to show you the way to Heaven?

Children: Yes, I do believe.

Leader: Do you believe that God the Holy Spirit lives among you and makes you children of God?

Children: Yes, I do believe.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leader: As God's true children, let us take all our needs to God in prayer. To each petition, please respond, "Hear us, O Lord." For Pope _____ and all leaders of the Church, that their work will give them the joy of Christ, let us pray to the Lord.



Children: Hear us, O Lord.

Leader: For ourselves and for all the people of our parish, that we will get the road ready for the Lord in all that we do, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Hear us, O Lord.

Leader: For those who will be separated from home and family this Christmas, that God will come to visit them, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Hear us, O Lord.

Leader: *Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:*

Let us pray. Loving God, when Christmas comes, we will celebrate the day long, long ago, when you came to live among us as a newborn baby. Help us to clear the way for you to come into our lives today. This we ask in Jesus' name.

Children: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to complete the Family Corner activities as a family.