

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

Today's Readings

1 Kings 17:10–16

Psalm 146:6d–7b, 7c–8abc,
8d–9abc

Mark 12:41–44

The Poor Widow Gives All She Has

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

One generation praises your deeds to the next and proclaims your mighty works. They speak of the splendor of your majestic glory, tell of your wonderful deeds. They speak of the power of your awesome acts and recount your great deeds. They celebrate your abounding goodness and joyfully sing of your justice. (Psalm 145:4-7)

Scripture Background

Scripture scholars warn that we misread today's Gospel if we think it simply conveys a lesson about giving until it hurts. On the contrary, while Jesus appreciated the generosity of the poor widow who gave away all she had to live on, he seems to have felt some contempt for those who took advantage of the simple faith of people like her.

Look at the verses immediately preceding those of today's Gospel. While teaching in the Temple, Jesus warns his audience of the hypocrisy of some teachers of the Law, who engaged in showy displays of "faith" while neglecting matters of simple honesty, especially where opportunities for personal gain existed. In verse 40, Jesus specifically condemns those teachers who cheat widows out of their homes.

According to *The Learning Bible* (New York: American Bible Society, 2000), "Some teachers even accepted large sums of money from widows for giving them advice or for praying for

Prepare the Meeting Space

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

- ▶ a jar of flour
- ▶ a cup of vegetable oil
- ▶ a plate with 2 pennies on it
- ▶ a jar full of play money
- ▶ If available, also place on or near the table a portrait of a smiling Jesus.

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

Gathering: "LOVE God" (Seeds CD-2, Track #21) or "Come Do This In Memory of Me" (Promise & Good News CD-1, Track #20)

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

them. Sometimes the widows even gave over their houses in payment.” Clearly Jesus opposed this sort of exploitation.

Consider, too, the verses following those of today’s Gospel. Jesus foretells the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, a prophecy that was fulfilled in AD 70 when Rome put down a Jewish rebellion. In making this prophecy right after a disciple has remarked on the temple’s beauty, Jesus seems to be hinting at the magnificent building’s relative insignificance in the eyes of God. It is God’s people that matter most, especially the poor, not any structure built or maintained through donations from rich people who exploit the poor.

Children’s Connections

In today’s Gospel, Jesus asks that we share our blessings with others, especially the needy. Jesus was not impressed by the material value of gifts offered by wealthy visitors to the Temple, but he was struck by the poor widow’s humble offering. While the hypocrisy of some people disgusted Jesus, the widow’s generosity inspired him.

In discussing the final question suggested for today’s homily, help the children see that God expects a little sacrifice from all of us every day. Otherwise Jesus would not have told his disciples, on another occasion, to pick up their crosses daily and follow him. But times of greater need do call for greater sacrifice.

Children responding to the victims of world tragedies are, in their own right, Christian heroes. Some children have even given away all their savings or all their birthday or Christmas money to help the suffering. These children might have been saving for some of the same “dream purchases” that the children are invited to discuss at the beginning of today’s liturgy. But, in taking seriously their call to love God and care for their neighbors, such unselfish young people surely bring a big smile to the face of Jesus in Heaven.

More About ...

Elijah in Jewish Tradition

In today’s First Reading we hear about the prophet Elijah, whose name means “Yahweh is God.” He was called to defend the God of Israel against the false gods of Israel’s neighbors during the corrupt rule of King Ahab. Elijah wound up fleeing for his life after proving on Mount Carmel that Baal, the god whom Queen Jezebel worshiped, was powerless against the God of Israel.

In first-century Palestine, a tradition endured that the prophet Elijah would return just ahead of the coming of the Messiah. In Matthew 11:14, Jesus alludes to this idea when he tells a crowd that John the Baptist “is Elijah, the prophet you are waiting for.” He does not mean that John is the great prophet reincarnated or resurfacing on an earth he never actually departed, but that Elijah’s zealous spirit lives on in John, and John’s prophetic ministry truly has prepared the way of the Lord.

The Children’s Leaflet

The leaflet for this week helps children learn about Jesus’ teaching about giving generously through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

You may distribute the leaflet now, for use during the session, or before the children return to the assembly. If you distribute the leaflet now and time permits, you may wish to read with the children the summary of the Gospel in “The Word of God This Week” after you have read the Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

Leaflet Activity

This week, families learn about making sacrifices. The children's leaflet includes a puzzle that contains ideas on ways to raise money to give to others in need

Ideas

- babysit
- bake sale
- car wash
- clothes drive
- craft fair
- food boxes
- snack stand
- talent show
- tutor
- walk-a-thon



The Liturgy of the Word

Gathering

Invite the children to take some play money—as much as they want—out of the jar on the table, and then take a seat. Next, ask them to imagine that their money is real and that they must spend it all within the next three days. What will they buy? Ask each child in turn to speak. Help the younger ones understand if they are trying to “overspend their hand.” After each child shares his or her dream purchase, have the child return the play money to the jar.

Tell the group that the other articles on display—flour, oil, and pennies—all are mentioned in today's readings and, if they listen carefully, they will notice when. The first story tells about the prophet Elijah and a widow; the second one, about Jesus and a widow.

Collect

Invite the children to bow their heads. Then pray:

Leader: Loving God, you sent your Son, Jesus, to live among us and share with us your life and love. May your Holy Spirit, living among us today, inspire us to care and share with others, just as he did. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

Children: Amen.

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

First Reading

Leader: When the prophet Elijah lived, there was a time when there was a serious food shortage. Poor people had nothing to eat except little flat pieces of bread made from flour and oil. Today's First Reading is about Elijah and a poor widow he met while he was traveling.

Read 1 Kings 17:10-16. 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: Praise the Lord, my soul!

Children: Praise the Lord, my soul!

Leader: Read Psalm 146:6d-7b, 7c-8abc, 8d-9abc.

Gospel Acclamation

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

Proclaim the Gospel

Leader: Today's Gospel tells a story about Jesus and a poor widow. This time there is no miracle at the end of the story—but there is an important lesson.

The Lord be with you.

Children: And with your Spirit.

Leader: A reading from the Gospel of Mark.

Children: † Glory to you, O Lord.

Leader: Read Mark 12:41-44. Then say, “The Gospel of the Lord.”

Children: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Talk with the group about these ideas and questions.

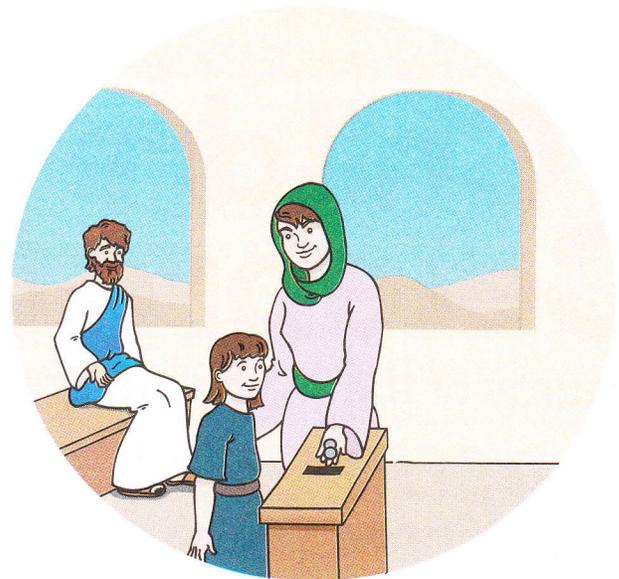
1. In both stories, there was a poor widow who gave from what little she had. What did the widow in the first story give to Elijah? What

did the widow in the second story give to the Temple?

2. In the second story, what was the difference between the offerings given by the rich people and the one given by the poor widow? The widow's gift, although less in value, represented a greater sacrifice. She had to deny herself some small comfort—perhaps a little candy—in order to have something to give. The rich donated money from their surplus and deprived themselves of nothing.

3. Jesus really admired the woman for making a sacrifice.

4. Do you think there are ever times when Jesus wants you to sacrifice? When might that be?



Children: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: That the people of our parish will be generous to the needy of our local community, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: That we ourselves will never refuse to help a neighbor in need, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Lord, have mercy.

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

Let us pray. Loving God, this week use our hearts to love other people. Use our hands to help them. Wherever we go and whatever we do, help us to care and share with our neighbors. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

Children: Amen.

Profession of Faith

Leader: Please stand for the Profession of Faith, and respond by repeating the words that follow, "Let us proclaim our faith." God the Father made us to live lives of love. Let us proclaim our faith: I believe in God the Father.

Children: I believe in God the Father.

Leader: God the Son saved us from sin, that we might learn to love more perfectly. Let us proclaim our faith: I believe in God the Son.

Children: I believe in God the Son.

Leader: God the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts and guides us in the way of love. Let us proclaim our faith: I believe in God the Holy Spirit.

Children: I believe in God the Holy Spirit.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leader: Today, let us remember in prayer all those in most need of our prayers. To each petition, please respond, "Lord, have mercy." That our Holy Father, Pope Francis, will receive the help of all the Church in showing God's love for the poor, let us pray to the Lord.

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.