

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

Jesus Returns to Gather His Followers

Today's Readings

Daniel 12:1–3
Psalm 16:5 & 8, 9–10, 11
Mark 13:24–32

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

But I trust in your mercy. Grant my heart joy in your salvation, I will sing to the LORD, for he has dealt bountifully with me! (Psalm 13:6)

Scripture Background

Do you ever feel as if you are carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders? The image of you, Atlas-like, hunkering down under the bulging world describes your feeling far better than the simple statement, "I feel stressed today."

So it is with today's readings. Vivid language is used to say that the time of Christ's return will be radically discontinuous with all that went before it. No longer will every segment of society be infiltrated with mean and self-centered people looking out only for themselves. At last these moral and spiritual ne'er-do-wells will stop troubling good people, those who long have been preparing for Christ's return through their labors for justice and peace. No longer will there be on this renewed earth some who serve the god of money; some, the god of power; and others, the god of pleasure. Those worshipers will be led away in "eternal shame and disgrace" (Daniel 12:2) while the ones who remain will be worshipers of God alone. In a creation redeemed and restored to God, God's people will experience an incredible lightness of being, as if they were shining stars in the sky above rather than earthbound creatures of flesh and bone.

Prepare the Meeting Space

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

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

For the homily, prepare a set of flashcards either by making simple line drawings on stiff paper or by downloading and printing out images. Each card should feature one image on the left and one image on the right with an equal sign between them. Here are the images needed:

- autumn leaf = flower
- ear = flute
- raindrops = running horses
- flowers = red lips
- sun = boxing glove
- church people = starry sky
- Christ = blazing sun

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

Gathering: "Gather Together" (Seeds CD-2, Track #1) or "Take This and Eat" (Promise & Good News CD-1, Track #21)

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

In Mark's Gospel, when Jesus says that the sun and the moon will stop shining when he comes again, it is another way of saying that light from these heavenly bodies will be eclipsed by his own glorious light. John uses similar language in Revelation 21:23 when he says there will be no need of sun or moon in the city of God, for it will shine with the glory of God and the light of the Lamb. What a glad day it will be when Christ comes again!

Children's Connections

Have you ever noticed how wise children can be about the things of God? Once three children were gazing at a richly embroidered tapestry of the Sacred Heart when the eldest said, "I know why he doesn't come to earth to live with us now. It's because he's so beautiful we'd lose our free will and do anything he wants without even thinking." What an insight into who Christ really is—someone who does not use his divine beauty to seduce, but rather to win the free assent of those he seeks for the Kingdom of God.

Works of the imagination have that kind of power over children, as does a well-planned liturgy. When it tastefully includes elements of music, dance, literature, and the visual arts, liturgy achieves an important goal set by the Church's Directory for Masses With Children: "The liturgy should never appear as something dry and merely intellectual." (#35)

Today's opening hymn, which allows for joyful, free-style dancing, sets the tone for further meditation on Christ's return as an occasion of celebration. The homily uses a familiar nursery rhyme as a gateway into a larger consideration of how figurative language works. Christ continually spoke in parables and metaphors, as he does in today's Gospel. When he looked at the sun and the moon in the sky, he thought of the infinitely brighter light of God's glory that would become visible, first, to his disciples on the day of his Resurrection and, second, to all the world's inhabitants on the day of his Second Coming. The homily ends with a challenge to children to think of Christ the light every time they behold these heavenly bodies. If that becomes a habit for them, they will be carrying into their everyday lives a central insight from today's liturgy.

More About ...

Apocalyptic Literature

Perhaps people of every generation think that they personally, or at least some of their contemporaries, suffer as no previous generation has. They ask themselves, how can the world keep going on like this?

That sentiment lies behind the Bible's apocalyptic literature, which appears in certain Old Testament books composed after 200 BC and nearly all New Testament books. The word *apocalypse* is Greek for "revelation." The revelation concerns God's gracious plans for those who endure persecution for their faith.

The Book of Daniel most likely was written in the second century BC during the time of the Maccabees, who revolted against the violent attempts of King Antiochus of Syria to impose Hellenistic worship on the Jews. The Gospel of Mark, written around AD 70, was meant to comfort Christians suffering imprisonment, torture, and death at the hands of Jews and Romans.

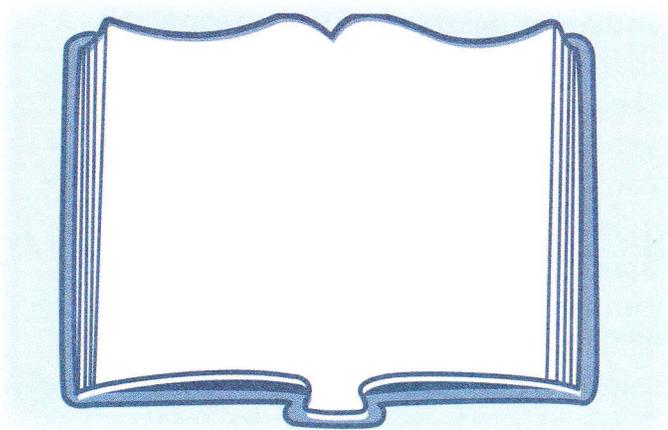
The Children's Leaflet

The leaflet for this week helps children learn about Jesus' Second Coming 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, children will discuss how they can joyfully prepare for Jesus' Second Coming.



The Liturgy of the Word

Gathering

After reaching the worship space, explain that today's liturgy is about the joy that will fill the hearts of believers when Jesus comes again.

Before playing the opening song, "In the Day of the Lord," read aloud these words from its refrain: "In the day of the Lord, the sun will shine /like the dawn of eternal day. /All creation will rise to dance and sing/the glory of the Lord!"

Tell the children that whenever these words are sung, they are to stand and clap along with the song. (They may sing along, too, if they wish.) Then when the other words are sung, they are to dance around the room in any style they wish. As soon as the refrain starts again they are to stand in place and start clapping and singing.

After the song is finished, invite the children to be seated in the worship space.

Collect

Leader: *Invite the children to bow their heads.*

Then pray:

Loving God, the candle we are about to light reminds us that your Son, Jesus, came to us from Heaven with the light of the Gospel. One day, he will return to us with the light of everlasting life. It will be a happy day for all the people on earth who know, love, and serve him. Please forgive us for the times we have spoken and acted sinfully. This we ask through the same Christ our Lord.

Children: Amen.

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

First Reading

Leader: In today's First Reading, the prophet Daniel describes what it will be like when Christ comes again. *Read Daniel 12:1-3.* 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: Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.

Children: Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.

Leader: *Read Psalm 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11.*

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: War, hunger, sickness: until Christ comes again, there will always be suffering in the world. But everything will change after he returns, and that is what today's Gospel is about.

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 13:24-32.* Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."

Children: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

1. Ask who knows the nursery rhyme "This Little Piggy." Invite the children who know it to recite it with you as you count off the lines on each of your five fingers:

This little piggy went to market,
This little piggy stayed home,
This little piggy had roast beef,
This little piggy had none.
And this little piggy went wee, wee, wee
all the way home.

2. Ask these questions:

- ▶ Why is it fun to pretend your fingers are little piggies?
- ▶ How is a finger like a little piggy? (It's small, it's pink)

3. Put on display the first five flash cards you prepared. Tell the children that comparisons are fun to make. Then ask for volunteers to step forward, one at a time, to point to the flashcard that matches each of these sentences:

- ▶ Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower. (autumn leaf = flower)
- ▶ In the Highlands, the wind played my ears like a flute. (ears = flute)
- ▶ The storm rain hoofed across the grass like galloping horses. (raindrops = running horses)
- ▶ Flowers in a city are like lipstick on women—they add a bit of color. (flowers = red lips)
- ▶ The sun hurt my eyes like a punch from a boxer. (sun = boxing glove)

4. Show your two remaining flash cards and explain that today's readings from Scripture make interesting comparisons, too. The comparisons are about the Day of the Lord that we sang about at the beginning of today's liturgy. It's the day Christ will come again.

- ▶ Daniel said that people who lead others to please God will shine like stars on that day. (church people = starry sky)
- ▶ Jesus said the sun and the moon would go dark, and he would appear in the sky in their place. That's just another way of saying he is the true light of the world, and on the last day everyone will understand this. (Christ = blazing sun)

5. So think about Jesus the next time you see the sun or moon shining in the sky, and think about all the good and holy people of the world the next time you see stars.

Profession of Faith

Leader: Please stand for the Profession of Faith, and answer each question with the words, "I believe."

Do you believe in God the Father, almighty and all-loving, your protector who keeps you safe until the last day?

Children: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, who will come again on the last day?

Children: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life?

Children: I believe.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leader: Now let us pray for all the graces we will need to be ready for Christ when he comes again. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord."

Children: Hear us, O Lord.

Leader: That our ears will be open to hearing God's Word in Scripture and the teachings of the holy Catholic Church, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Hear us, O Lord.

Leader: That our eyes will be open to seeing Christ in our fellow human beings, especially the lowliest and neediest, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Hear us, O Lord.

Leader: That our hands will be open to receiving God's blessings and sharing them with others, 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. Holy God, you have called us to live in the light of Christ, both in this world and the next. May all our thoughts, words, and actions give you honor and praise, so that we will be ready for Christ when he comes again. This we ask through the same Christ our Lord.

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.