

Liturgy of the Word with Children
4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
1 February, 2026
Matthew 5:1-12

Catechist Background

This Gospel reading is familiar to many people. It is a popular choice for weddings and funerals, and is read on All Saints Day. It begins Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, which follows in a tradition of ancient revelations from God happening on mountaintops (Moses received the Commandments on Mount Sinai, the Greeks believed the gods lived on Mount Olympus).

The beatitude format ('Blessed are they who... they shall...') was a popular scriptural mode of expression, especially used in the Psalms. Jesus' Beatitudes were more controversial, as he called 'blessed' those who in first century culture (and today) were often seen as the opposite of blessed. He stressed that God and humans do not always value the same things. Some Beatitudes are about now ('theirs IS the Kingdom of Heaven') and some are future-oriented ('they SHALL be satisfied'), indicating that those who follow the Beatitudes are benefitting now and will do so in the future.

In the first beatitude, Jesus introduced the topic that he discussed the most in the Scriptures: The Kingdom of God (Heaven). Matthew's Gospel, written for a Jewish audience, calls this the Kingdom of Heaven, as Jews would avoid saying 'God' out of respect for God's other-ness. Similarly, a literary device is employed to avoid using God's name: i.e., the text reads, 'They shall be comforted,' not 'God will comfort them.' The implied meaning would have been clear to the first hearers.

Setting the Scene

For the activity described below, you will need to have the Beatitudes written individually on posters, with space underneath for writing or drawing, and also pens and pencils for writing and drawing.

We Say Sorry

As we prepare to hear God's words, we remember the times when we have got our lives in a muddle.

Leader: You came to teach us, Lord have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: You comfort those who mourn, Christ have mercy.

All: **Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: You ask us to be merciful as you are merciful, Lord have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Gloria

We Pray (1)

God, help us to love you with our whole hearts and to love all people as you love them. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12

Reflecting on the Gospel Reading with Children

Ask the children:

- Who would like to be happy all the time?
- What does Jesus say will make people happy?
- Does that make sense to you or does it seem back-to-front?

Show a selection of magazine advertisements to the children and say:

- These adverts suggest to us things that might make people happy. Are they telling the truth?
 - Would you be happy all the time just because you owned a *[name something in an ad]*?
- Did anyone get something that they really, REALLY wanted for Christmas last month?
 - Have they been completely and constantly happy since then? Why not?
- Sometimes we think something will make us happy if we get it, but that isn't always true.
- Can you think of any examples? *[being better than the sportiest child at football, but if he is ill with chickenpox, we may be better than him, but it might not feel good and it won't last. Or having a certain person as a best friend, but that might not work out if we are unkind to them.]*

Response

Divide the group into smaller groups of about 4 each with different age children in each.

- Give each group a pre-prepared poster with a Beatitude written on it, with the 'Blessed are they' part on the left side of the paper and the 'They shall...' part on the right.
 - *[If you do not have many children, use the Beatitudes that you think are most relevant.]*
- Ask the children to write/draw on their poster *why* Jesus said these backwards-sounding things.
 - How will being 'meek/peacemakers/hungry for justice etc' help others?
 - How will it help them? [For instance, in 'Blessed are the merciful,' people who try to be merciful may be happier with themselves than people who are bossy, nasty or bullies.]
- Give each group an opportunity to share with the others when they are finished.
- *Younger children will need more support from the leaders in this activity.*
- *Ask older ones what they think Jesus would say if he was alive today?*
 - *Which Beatitudes are especially relevant today?*

We Believe

Relating the Creed to what you have shared with the children, ask these questions and invite them to reply: 'I do.'

- Do you believe in God who has made us to be peaceful children of God?
- Do you believe in Jesus the Son who came to call us back to the Kingdom of heaven?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who is with us and helping us to live as we should?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying: 'Lord, we trust that you want the whole world to be happy and so we now pray...'

Leader: We pray for missionaries and anyone punished for talking about Jesus. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for judges and people who make important decisions. May they use Jesus' wisdom to guide their judgements. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for those who are treated badly because they are different. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for anyone in our area who is feeling unhappy for any reason. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, help us to share the happiness you give us with those we see every day. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.