

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Third Sunday of Advent, Year A
14 December, 2025
Matthew 11:2-11

Catechist Background

Today's Gospel reading is set when John the Baptist was in prison, and seeming to be disappointed that Jesus' messiahship had not brought about the changes he expected. (This took place sometime after John baptised Jesus in the Jordan). John was Jesus' cousin and, one might think therefore, that if your cousin was the Messiah (God's Chosen One), some preferential treatment might be in order, or at least a release from prison. Like many others, John misunderstood what type of saviour Jesus was to be. He was not about to overthrow their Roman occupiers and oppressors and reinstitute a Jewish state, ushering in an age of prosperity for their people. At that time, that was the popular expectation of what the Messiah would do. Jesus took his understanding of what type of Messiah he would be from today's First Reading, broadening the Kingdom of Heaven for all people. In his final statement that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John the Baptist, Jesus definitively stated that membership is not limited to race, class, culture, nationality or any other of life's circumstances.

Setting the Scene

Traditionally, the liturgical colour for the Third Sunday of Advent is rose (pale red or pink), hence the third candle on your Advent wreath might be rose, and the priest and other things in the church today may be in this colour. If that is the case, do explain this to the children.

In liturgical terms, rose is simply a lighter form of purple and it is the colour for today, because the Third Sunday marks the halfway point (or later) in Advent, the point at which the Church senses that Christmas is not far off. It is sometimes called "Gaudete Sunday" – 'Gaudete' means 'rejoice', and it is the first word in the Entrance Antiphon at today's Mass. In former times when Christians fasted during the first weeks of Advent, this Sunday was the point in which the fast was ended, and so things started to feel more celebratory.

We Say Sorry

Leader: Lord Jesus, you came to bring peace.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You come to us in your Word to make us strong, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You will come in glory with salvation for your people, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

We Pray (1)

Loving God, remove all sadness from us and help us to celebrate with joy Christ's coming into the world. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

In today's Gospel reading, we meet John the Baptist again:

- Do you remember what John did before this, when he first met Jesus (he baptised him);
- In this reading, John doesn't seem to be very happy. Why do you think this is? (he's in prison, and Jesus isn't doing the sort of things which John expected him to do);
- What sort of things did John expect Jesus to do? (lead an army against the Romans);
- Did Jesus do that? (No);
- How did that make John feel? (puzzled, maybe angry).

Instead, Jesus did many things which showed he was God's Chosen one, 'the Messiah':

- Can you name some of them? (He healed people and gave them hope: the lame walked, lepers were cleansed, the blind could see, the dead were raised, and the poor had the good news proclaimed to them);
- In today's world, people are sometimes helped by God in different ways: they feel supported when life is difficult or sad, sometimes they are healed in ways we don't understand and at other times they find hope. *[Do talk about these as literally or metaphorically as you see fit];*
- Jesus makes some of these things happen today, but he isn't living here today, so how does he do that? (through us - we are the Body of Christ on earth);
- How can we tell when Jesus is doing those things for us? Do we notice Jesus acting through others when we are being comforted or helped? (Sometimes, but we have to try).

Response

Get the children into pairs.

- Have one person in the pair ('A') 'be' somebody who is blind by covering their eyes;
- The other person ('B') will then symbolically restore their sight by removing their hands from their eyes;
- Next, A will 'be' someone who cannot walk by sitting down, arms outstretched;
- B will help them get up;
- Continue through the list that Jesus gave as a summary of what he was doing;
- Allow both children to be the healed and healer, either by taking turns or going through the list twice.

We Believe

Relate the Creed to what you have shared with the children by asking these questions and inviting the children to reply, 'I do.'

- Do you believe in God the Father who made us out of love?
- Do you believe in Jesus the Messiah who came to bring us back to God?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who inspires us to show Jesus' love on earth today?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying 'Just like 2000 years ago, there are people in need in our world today and so we pray...'

Leader: We pray for Christians like John the Baptist, who are imprisoned for speaking out against injustice. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for leaders everywhere, that they may seek to build Jesus' type of Kingdom on earth. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for peace, especially where there is anger and fear. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for anyone we know who is losing their sight or their hearing or their ability to move. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, there are many ways that we can show your love to those who are poor, lonely or sad. Help us to do this when we can. We make our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

