

**Liturgy of the Word with Children**  
**31<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B**  
**3 November 2024**  
**Mark 12:28-34**

### **Catechist Background**

The conversation in today's Gospel reading takes place after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, in the week leading up to his crucifixion. Jesus has recently silenced objections raised to him by the Temple priests, Pharisees and Sadducees. These earlier inquisitors were all hostile to Jesus and clearly trying to catch him out. However, the scribe in today's reading seems genuinely interested after Jesus' advice on what was a hot topic of debate for scribes at the time. This was because it was sometimes very difficult to enact each of the hundreds of commands listed in the Torah within the specified time frames.

Jesus gives the scribe two pieces of the Hebrew scriptures to ponder. The first of these, from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is called the 'Shema' and was recited three times a day by Jewish men (and frequently women as well)/ This text was put into small boxes, and tied on to doors and gates and arms and foreheads as 'phylacteries' (Greek) or 'tefillin' (Hebrew). These practices continue to the present day except in Reform Jewish groups. The second text, from Leviticus 19:18, originally applied the term 'neighbour' to mean only one's fellow countrymen. It was later understood to also apply to aliens living in the locality and later to mean all humanity.

By hinging all the other commandments on these two, Jesus reminded him (and us) that the laws were not given just for the sake of jumping through hoops, but as an expression of love for God and for the people God puts in our lives.

### **Setting the Scene**

For the activity described below you will need some images of Jewish phylacteries (these are easily found on the internet, especially by looking up images of 'tefillin' in a search engine).

### **We Say Sorry**

Leader: You love all of humanity, Lord have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: You challenge us to do the same, Christ have mercy.

**All: Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: You love us even when we fail, Lord have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

### **Gloria**

### **We Pray (1)**

God, help us to joyfully praise you with our lives in all we do. Amen.

### **Gospel Acclamation**

**Gospel:** Mark 12:28-34

### **Reflecting on the Gospel Reading with Children**

- Why do you think the scribe asked Jesus what was the most important commandment?
- Do you remember what Jesus told him?
- What about the second most important commandment?
- Why do you think these are the most important two?

## Response

Show the children the pictures of Jewish phylacteries. Explain that they contain pieces of scripture that are so important that Jews wore, and still wear today, them to remind them of their importance by their physical presence.

Look around your children's liturgy space and see if there are any reminders of the most important elements of what we believe—crucifixes, statues, pictures, even jewellery worn by the leaders may remind us of Jesus' love for us.

Give the children a long, narrow strip of paper, and for those who can write, encourage them to copy down the words of Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (have some pre-prepared for children who are too young to write).

Suggest that the children decorate the strips of paper with important symbols of God's love. Encourage them to display them at home as a reminder of the most important commandment. Older children may be interested in seeing and even copying the first words of the Shema in Hebrew: (remember that Hebrew reads right-to-left).

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

## We Believe

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

- Do you believe in God the Father who created the world and gave us rules to be happy?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ, God the Son, who came to call us back to God's love?
- Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit who helps us to love God and each other?

## We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying, 'We know the world needs your help to grow in love and so we now pray:'

Leader: We pray for Christians all over the world, that we may extend Jesus' love to all people, including those who are not like us. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for all countries which are choosing new leaders, inspire people to choose wisely, lovingly and well. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: As the weather gets colder, we pray for all those who do not have warm homes to live in. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for our nearby neighbours, our faraway loved ones, and anyone who needs our prayers. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Lord, help us to see the needs around us and to act in a way to share your love with others. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

