

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C
7 September, 2025
Luke 14: 25-33

Catechist Background

Parts of today's Gospel reading sound harsh to us, especially the bit about hating one's family and self. However, hyperbole was a normal way of speaking in the ancient Middle East. Jesus said he came to fulfil the Jewish Law (part of which was honouring one's parents), and he instructed his listeners to love all. So, scholars agree that his original listeners would have understood him to mean that we must love him more than anyone. *[Be sensitive to the needs of children in the group; some Children's Liturgy resources suggest changing the text to 'If you want to be my disciple, you must love me more than anyone.']* In Jesus' time, your family was your safety net - they were the ones to bail you out in a crisis. So spurning them and instead putting one's trust in Jesus was very risky.

'Picking up one's cross' did not refer to an actual cross or crucifixion, but to the difficulties that people face as a result of being faithful to Christ. It seems to refer to a popular Greco-Roman phrase which meant 'to offer one's life for a cause.' Jesus' audience were challenged to offer their lives for Christ.

Finally, Jesus was challenging them to give up their possessions, thus emphasising the importance of following him and placing his commandments first. They (and we) were encouraged to think seriously about whether they had the endurance to follow Christ. He did this by reminding them of the shame and embarrassment felt by those who begin things they cannot finish. Perhaps this is the biggest challenge for those of us who were baptised as infants and have been part of the Church all our lives.

Setting the Scene

If your Children's Liturgy group does not take place in the summer, or if many of the children have been away, it may help to have a decent moment to welcome everyone back at the start.

For the activity below, you will need bricks, blocks or boxes labelled with the letters 'J-E-S-U-S.'

We Say Sorry

Leader: Lord Jesus, you invite us to follow you, Lord have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: You are present among us in each other, Christ have mercy.

All: **Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: You are the giver of all good gifts, Lord have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Gloria

We Pray (1)

Lord God, you have made us your children. Help us see the good things you have given to us. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Luke 14:25-33

Reflecting on the Gospel Reading with Children

- What were some of the things that Jesus said that people must do to be a true disciple?
- What did he mean when he said that?
 - Does Jesus want us to hate others? (No – he wants us to love everyone).

- So Jesus must have meant something different when he said this. What did he mean?
 - Think about the things you love (such as toys, chocolate, ice cream, holidays).
 - It is okay to love those things, but they are not the most important things in life.
 - Do you think Jesus wants us to love those things more than we love him? (No)
- So, maybe Jesus is saying that we need to decide who and what are most important to us.
- Who created all the things that we love? (God)
- So, we should love God more than anything else, and that's what Jesus is saying in the Gospel.

Response

We are going to act out one of the short parables in today's Gospel reading:

- Ask for a volunteer to make a tower of bricks that spell 'Jesus.'
- Give them the building blocks to make the tower, but keep one letter hidden from the child, to make the task impossible.
 - (If the children in your group are too young for letters to have meaning, ask the child to build a tower 'this high' instead, and make the target height greater than what is possible with the bricks available.)
- Encourage the children to see that when building something, it is a bad idea to start building without being able to finish.
- Help them to see that following Jesus is a life-long journey, one to which we need to commit.
- Produce the missing brick that will make the tower possible.
- Then allow each child to build a 'Jesus tower.'

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 has created the world out of love?
- Do you believe in God the Son, Jesus, who invites us to be his friends and followers?
- Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit who helps us to put Jesus first in our hearts and actions?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying: 'We want to put you first in our lives and in our world and so we now pray...'

Leader: We pray for people who lead our Church, that they may faithfully and joyfully follow Jesus.
Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for world leaders, that they may not harm people who do what Jesus asks of them.
Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people who suffer in war and violence. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for our families and our friends. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, help us to put you first in our lives so that we can make your world more like it should be. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.