

Liturgy of the Word with Children
First Sunday of Advent, Year C
1 December 2024
Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

Catechist Background

As the first Christians awaited Jesus' return, they understandably wanted and needed reassurance through the difficult circumstances which they were enduring. Luke provides that reassurance by emphasising that even when dreadful things occur, God does not abandon us, but is closer than we realise. Luke urges his readers not to give up their faith in Christ and the conduct that goes with that faith, but to stand firm in belief and proper living.

Since the first century, people have seen some of the things listed in this Gospel reading as 'signs' and interpreted them as evidence of Jesus' imminent return, sometimes even citing a particular date. As of yet, these soothsayers have all been wrong. Jesus himself did not even know the day or the hour (Mark 13:32), but we should be prepared at all times for Jesus to return.

Setting the Scene

As it is the beginning of Advent, explain briefly what Advent is about: it is the four weeks before Christmas when we remember that Jesus said he will return, and that he was born in Bethlehem in the Holy Land about 2000 years ago. Using a map of the world or a globe you could show the children where Bethlehem/the Holy Land is.

You may have a special Advent wreath for the Children's Liturgy group, and want to begin your time together by lighting the first candle. If you don't have a specific one for the group, you could draw attention to the parish Advent wreath which they will have seen lit in the church.

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)

Lord, help us be people who are hopeful for your return. Especially in this season of Advent, we want to be eager to welcome you into our hearts. Amen.

Gospel Introduction

This is in many ways a difficult Gospel reading to grasp, particularly for children. So, it might help to offer an introduction before today's Gospel is read. Ask the children to suggest some scary things that might one day happen. Emphasise that no matter what scary things happen, we don't need to be afraid, because God will be with us through any difficulty, as we are about to hear.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

Reflecting on the Gospel reading with children

- How does it feel when something scary happens? How does it make you want to behave? (Children might respond that they feel frightened, and that they don't want to be friendly with others, or might want to do something else entirely, or they might want to hide).
- Jesus asks us to be brave, because we are about to be set free. Difficult times don't last forever, but even within them, He is with us.

Response

- Ask two children to act like wild ocean waves, and for the other children to stand firm and 'hold their heads high.'
- After this, ask two other children to act like a noisy earthquake while the others remain courageous.
- After their turn, ask two more children to act like a noisy storm.
- Take suggestions from the children about what would be frightening things that we should be brave during, and enact them, or come up with your own ideas.
- You may choose to sing a child-appropriate song about being brave with God's help.

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 loving Father who sent his Son, Jesus, to be with us?
- Do you believe that Jesus Christ came to Bethlehem and will come again?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps us to be courageous like Jesus?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying, 'Jesus said that he will return, and until then we give our worries to him as we pray...'

Leader: We pray that the Church may live like Jesus wants us to live, until his return.
Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray that our rulers make laws that will help people to serve God better.
Lord in your mercy:

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for those who are hurt by natural disasters or by events caused by others. Lord in your mercy:

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for us gathered here and for our families. We especially pray for anyone who is afraid. Lord in your mercy:

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, you know what is best for us. Help us to trust you.
We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

